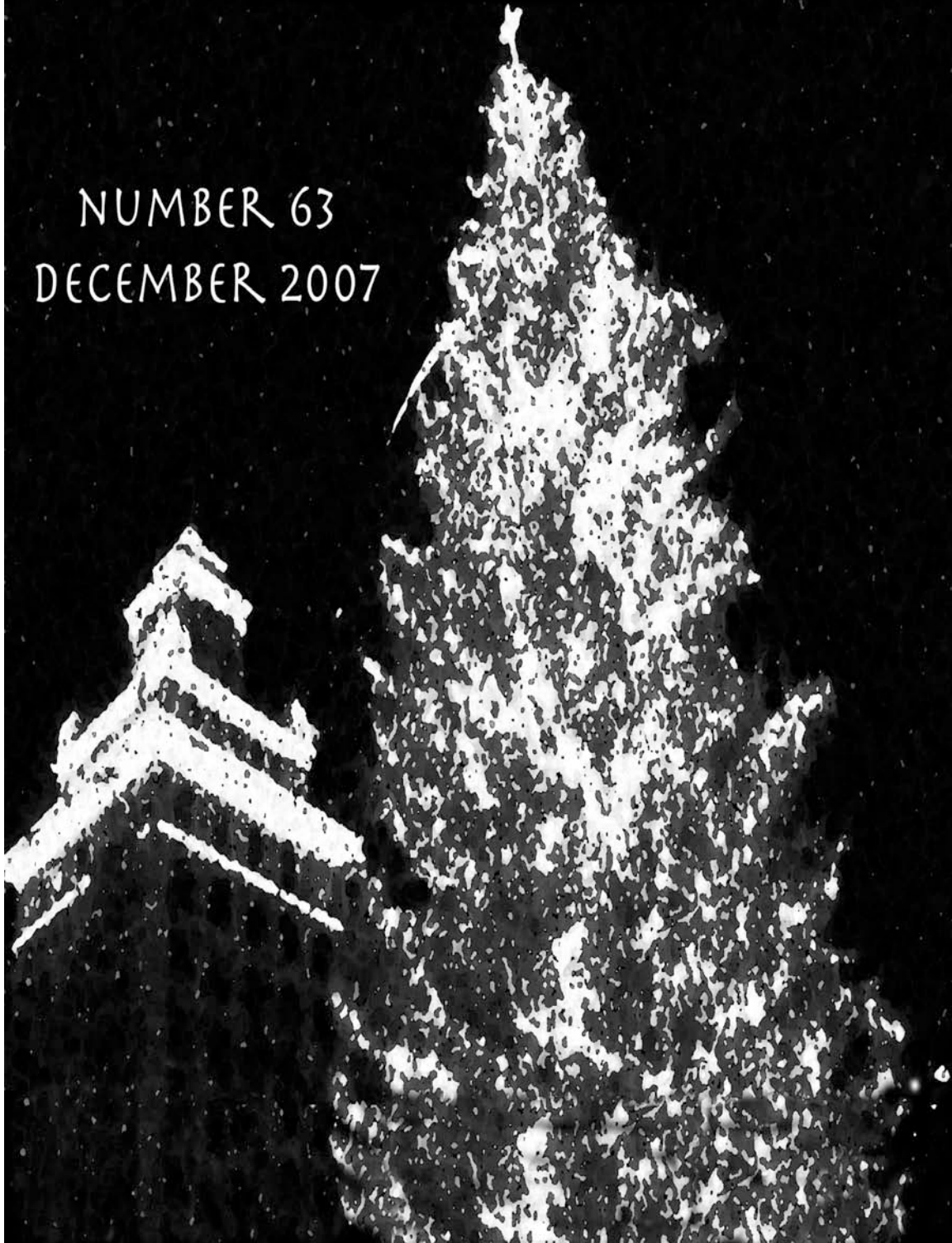


The Cenacle

NUMBER 63
DECEMBER 2007



All this universe lies strung on the sun, like rows of gems on a thread.

— INDIA —

*—Washington Park Train Station,
Portland, Oregon*

*Letter to United States Senator
Edward M. Kennedy
(Democrat, Massachusetts)*

Excerpt from 12/11/07 email from Senator Edward M. Kennedy:

"Republicans apparently think it's acceptable to continue pouring billions of taxpayer dollars into the war in Iraq. They think it's acceptable to ignore the needs and priorities of our people here at home on dozens of vital domestic issues!

"But it's not acceptable to this Senator.

"If you agree with me—if you want to end the GOP's distorted priorities and get America back on track—help elect a Democratic Senate that will do it. Make a donation of \$10, \$20, \$50 or \$100 to the Committee for a Democratic Majority today"

December 11, 2007

Portland, Oregon

Dear Senator Kennedy,

Your party was swept back into the majority in the Congress in 2006 on the promise to END THE WAR. A year later, your party has done nothing, and now there is news that another bag of war money is going to be approved with no strings attached, supposedly to pay for pet domestic projects.

Tell me, Senator, why should I send you a dollar? Your leading candidates for President do not promise an end to the War. They make vague promises of drawing down, by some number, at some point. Your leadership is hand in hand with the War Criminal-in-Chief in continuing this nightmare. The progressive base is ready to jump ship, really ready, and I'm betting a third party will emerge in the next year or so.

Disappointment is not the word I have for Washington Democrats. Disgust doesn't go far enough. Your party's leadership is puke. And where are you, Senator? Where are you? Why are you letting traitors like Reid and Pelosi sell out this nation and this world? Why aren't you leading a real, credible well-announced opposition NOW instead of writing pathetic emails asking for money for someday's solution? Where is the revolt of REAL progressive democrats NOW? There is none. There is cowardice, raw great pathetic cowardice.

I will not send you a penny. You are a shame to your family's tradition. How many more soldiers and Iraqi citizens must die before you wake up to your own soft, sorry, moral blubber?

Wake up, Senator. This country's population is far ahead of you in DC in wanting the war OVER and the poor and vulnerable cared for. It will happen, whether the Democratic Party leads the way, or is swept aside with their bedmates in the other party.

Peace NOW,



(Further notes)

Not a letter I wanted to write...

but Senator Kennedy is not leading the progressives in the Democratic Party in revolt against the Reid/Pelosi traitor leadership. I know he opposes the War. I know he believes in progressive causes. I know his family has done so much to benefit the poor and vulnerable. But I would have written to many other allegedly progressive Senators and Representatives a similar letter. Feingold, Boxer, Byrd, etc. There are no more excuses on this situation. Another War funding approval, no strings attached? Another? Are you kidding me? This has to end. People are dying, now, tonight. That Congressmen and women are sleeping in their nice beds and walking down their streets in perfect safety while Iraq is a bloodbath, a moral bloodbath, a literal bloodbath, a human failure at all levels, I cannot support them. I would not have written to Kennedy if he hadn't sent me an email asking for money, boasting of his own clean conscience anti-war stance.

RFK ran for President on ending the Vietnam War, and maybe he paid for this with his life, as some say Dr. King did too. It is said JFK was killed in part for his plan to draw down the American presence in Vietnam. I don't know if all of this is true, but it is clear these men took unnuanced stances on the War. Their brother is sitting back, showing his unblemished hands but not doing what needs to be done.

When I lived in Boston, I voted for him twice and was proud to. I am not proud of him any longer, or any of them. I don't believe them, their vows and promises. The vast majority of this country wants us out of Iraq. They are hindering this desire rather than representing us as elected to. I am angry, and asking me to give money to hypocrites just makes me angrier. . . .

He's a decent man, but he is a man of power right now, and I do not see that power being used effectively, and I see the deadly results of this. While men and women in Washington blithely debate the issues, and plan their holiday breaks, soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are dying, and families in those places and here in the U.S. are suffering unbelievably, and *needlessly*. It's easier, perhaps, to debate these things civilly, at a leisured rate, but to my mind this is cowardice, it's treason to the commitment our elected representatives make to do their best by us.

We live in one world, and what we do now, and how we do it, will have its effects in time. If we do right by one another, especially for the downtrodden and the helpless, but of course each one of us, each being on the planet, we have hope of a better future. If we do wrong, the bastards will keep us apart from each other, killing each other, poor and dying in vain. So while it can be argued over whether it is more effective to go after the lazy heroes of the Democratic Party or the criminals of the Republican Party, I take the stance that any man or woman in Washington not acting defiantly and constantly to end the War is a person I oppose. And when one of those persons asks me for money, claiming some kind of moral superiority that in my opinion is not earned, I will reply from my convictions outlined here. It's really simple. Are those representing us in Washington trying their best, their damndest best, to get us out of Iraq? No. A year since the Dems were swept back into power and they are now trading no-strings-attached war chests for pork??? No, sorry, I'm not on that boat. I'm giving them excuses no longer. Some of them knew about the torture going on? What else?

If the progressive representatives and senators in the party do not do more to stop the leadership from parking on a daily basis ass-high before Bush's big boot, then they are just as culpable. I can't parse it any other way than that. . . .

I wish Dr. King were here. I wish John Lennon were here. Not being ever able to know, I just dream of them speaking out clearly and daily and gathering crowds to their speeches to rally action against the War. But if one of them was sitting back while this horror was going on, I'd be just as angry. You see, I want Kennedy's actions in VOTES, in campaigning HARD AND THROUGH CHRISTMAS AND BEYOND for the War to END. It can be done. Washington can be shut down until this nightmare is over.

I just finished watching *1968 with Tom Brokaw* on the History Channel. He interviewed Jon Stewart who noted that the difference between Iraq and Vietnam is the draft. I think he's right but I don't think that is all. Vietnam was a battlefield for the Cold War, fought by proxy with the US and USSR waving their nukes around in the background. The US has no combatant like that now, no Evil Empire to point at on the map, no sense that occupying Iraq is bringing us closer and closer to nuclear annihilation. There's a bully mentality that we can do it and nobody can stop us. The "opposition" arguing against this, in favor of reason and humility and brotherhood,

politely introducing bills and then agreeably watching them die . . . the enemy to democracy is running our country, and I swear there is collusion with this on all sides.

And waiting for 2008? How is Hillary going to be convinced that her administration's success hinges on getting us out of Iraq if she sees no consequences for Bush in not doing so? How will any of her opponents? The disease is in the roots, the complacency of Empire, and it's hard to believe it will change enough through an election where the process is so choreographed in advance. So if we want to change things, we can't have any sacred cows. Nobody is immune to the consequences of the changes needed.

It's really simple. We hire the representatives in Washington through elections to do what we want done. They are our employees. Every 2, 4, or 6 years they can get fired. They are as good as how satisfied we are. Very few of us are satisfied right now, nor have been for awhile. None of them are immune to being fired, just like none of us working Joes and Josephines are. They forget that and expect to be re-elected. The Republicans did it. Now the Democrats are assuming we are stuck with the lot of them.

Let me tell you. Times change. Rome fell. The French Empire fell. The Nazi 1000-year reign was over in about a dozen years. Empires rise and fall, so do democratic republics. That's the story of human history.

Reid/Pelosi and the rest of the treacherous, colluding leadership and their dogs can bite my shine metal ass. As for Kennedy and the more progressive bunch, I do not see balls on many of them either, so to speak. No politician gets my loyalty simply for a party affiliation or a family name. It just doesn't work that way. They have to learn this, over and over it seems.

I hate it the way things have been going, but I'm sure as hell not going to sit back quiet about it. . . .

My breaking point was the news that Democrats are negotiating no-strings-attached war funding in exchange for domestic spending projects. I've had it. I'm done explaining and excusing and watching the Republicans go on governing no matter what percentage of the Congress they represent at a given moment. I'm done defending the Democrats.

One day a person takes it once too often and says no. Says it again. Finds the world does not end, and it is still spinning. We can say no to what is going on in Iraq and direct our wrath at Washington which is producing this horror. We are not getting what we voted for in 2006, not getting anything close. In fact, what have we gotten? Nothing has changed.

Do we trust the Democrats to stop Bush when he puts invading Iran up for a vote? Do we trust them for anything when they are failing us on the most important issue of our time? How does the War end at this point? How does it slow down? How do we not simply get used to being outraged and impotent, excusing those who have no justification to offer for themselves? There are no consequences for Bush.

He has a 30 percent approval rating, lost the Congress a year ago, admits to torture, to wiretapping, disregards the UN, ignores his own intelligence community's explicit statement that Iran poses no nuclear threat. Consequences? None. He rolls along.

Will it change in 2008? I keep asking that. When Pelosi and Rockefeller knew about the torture of prisoners under American sanction? When Clinton and Obama talk in their reasonable, persuasive terms about attacking Iran or Pakistan?

The power is ours to end this, to re-direct the nation's path. We tried in 2006, it wasn't enough. The Machine is potent and it does not shift willingly. Washington is disconnected from us, from our country, from our world, yet it drives the wheel still. They let torture, wiretapping, illegal war, go on, right now. Get it, *please*, they are not on our side. Not now, not cowering in their fear and complacency and whatever else it is that is driving them. We can say no, louder and louder, more and more of us, until every one of them hears, and is driven by our will, the only one that should be driving them. The only one in Washington they should be heeding. . . .

I lived in Massachusetts for ten years and voted for Kennedy twice, and respect his family's name, and respect his long service. None of that, however, diverts me from my point which is that he is one more Democrat being led calmly down Bush's chosen path. I can't see it any other way. I can't see war-funding-for-domestic-programs as something other than iniquitous. I can't see how they can take their month-long vacation while people during that month will continue to die in Iraq. I cannot see these days in Washington as business as usual. I can't do it. I can't excuse Democrats for the number of times they have voted to fund the War, for allowing funding votes to come to the floors of Congress, for letting personal interest rise above what must be done. I am no less angry because nothing has happened to quell my anger. Not a thing, not today, not tomorrow. When?

The longer we occupy Iraq, the more danger we are in for reprisals overseas and domestically, the more innocent people die, the more parents receive the sober call notifying them their children have died, the more children lose parents, the more spouses lose their partners. Nothing is stopping this. These comments aren't stopping it. Senator Kennedy isn't stopping it. The Democratic majority isn't stopping it. Another soldier will die tonight. Another baby. Another suicide bomb will go off and horror upon horror will repeat itself.

What are we doing? I received an email asking me for money, and replied with little faith it would be read or considered seriously, and at best I have elaborated on this letter with further thoughts and opinions. I have solidified my ideas, for now, until events occur to change it. What is happening is wrong and I see no solution being battled for with fist and blood and words of fire. Nothing.

The War is not ending. Does anyone else see that? It's going on tonight, tomorrow, soon it will have more money without timetables, and more after that. Will the next President end it? If so, wonderful! But what if he or she doesn't? What

will we do then? What if Hillary or whomever says, “no, it can’t end, not now, but soon, I promise”? What then?

The days are now less than a year’s worth until the next President is elected. What if hopes for the War ending then are not met? What if Bush and Company are busy making sure the War does not end? This is no game of words, no dance between alluring ideas. Someone just died over there, and another, and another. When does it end? Nobody can truly say. I have less hope now than I have had in a long time, and I can’t think of anything anyone could say to me that would make me feel more optimistic.



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PORTLAND, OREGON



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Thanks to my new employer who pays me better, treats me better, & handed me a laptop computer & said go work wherever ye can find a ‘net connection...thank you to good green Portland, Oregon for newly welcoming KD and for welcoming me back I always said I’d be coming back...lastly, a sweet, loving, somewhat soppy & sentimental thanks & fare-thee-well to Seattle, Washington, strange Pacific Northwest US city, where KD & I lived for several years on lovvvvvely Capitol Hill, city where we worked & schooled & journeyed & came back from a far town married one fine day, city we tried to find a long-term groove in but now remember our shorter term one fondly, dear freak ville, we love you now as always...



Leaving Seattle series

Dale Pendell



Green Flames: Thoughts on Burning Man, the Green Man, and Dionysian Anarchism

i. Burning Man as a “temporary autonomous zone.”

The Burning Man arts festival¹ was born in free and visionary revelry, and matured on the Black Rock Desert into a great gathering of the tribes, from the cyber-freaks to the lushy rednecks to the altered-consciousness pentathletes to the nasty punks to the fuckin’ hippies. And everything in between. This alone, from a historical perspective, is a matter of wonder and for rejoicing.

There was another big event, not as big as Burning Man in numbers, but also historically important, in Golden Gate Park, forty years ago, that was called “Gathering of the Tribes.” Gary Snyder spoke at that event, as did Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Alan Watts, and others.

Such gatherings often take place in what Hakim Bey calls a “temporary autonomous zone,” in cracks and hidden openings overlooked by the guardians of the State. Bey was careful to refrain from defining TAZ rigorously, but it is clear that TAZ is applicable to the free spirit and the festive excesses of Burning Man:

*The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it.*²

Other forces besides the State can quell a temporary autonomous zone: it can be co-opted by the market; it can exhaust its imagination and good will; or it can compromise itself into a more acceptable form. All of these forces continue to exert tremendous pressure on Burning Man.

Many burners feel that the “true TAZ” aspect of Burning Man peaked in the mid-1990s, and has declined ever since. Others, of course, say “stop complaining and party.” Whatever the truth, Burning Man is still a vibrant force with far-reaching social, political, and artistic potential.

ii. Dionysian Anarchism

There has been a debate going on in philosophy for 2500 years about human nature. In fact, it is the only really crucial question of philosophy. At stake is the rationalization for a

¹ Burning Man 2007’s theme was “The Green Man,” which was described, in part, thusly: “This year our art theme will express the immanence of nature in our lives in a variety of ways.” For further information on this festival, visit <http://www.burningman.com>.

² The text of *TAZ* (Autonotopia Anti-copyright, 1985, 1991) can be found at bookstores or free online at: <http://www.hermetic.com/bey/taz3.html#labelTAZ>

hierarchical, oppressive state. Before philosophers, religion imputed that human society should be like that of the gods, usually with a top god, and with the others doing their respective parts. These early state religions stressed that the kings on earth, if not divine themselves, were reflections of the order of heaven.

Plato, in the *Republic*, introduced the “Noble Lie,” that the wise should tell the commoners lies and myths to keep them in their place. A corollary is that if you don’t assist this process, you are not one of the wise, and you will be punished, if not with death or imprisonment, at least with marginalization.

Thomas Hobbes said that people were rapacious beasts, who would start killing and eating each other if it weren’t for an armed police force. Our mainstream culture seems desperate to maintain this viewpoint. During Hurricane Katrina, while the self-organizing cooperative efforts of thousands and tens of thousands of citizens to help each other went largely unreported, a scene of looting was replayed over and over. The clear message is “see, people can’t be trusted. We need the police.” In fact, police (or private security goons) broke up, and even fired on, the emerging cooperatives.

So who is on the other side? Many, actually. First off, we have the evidence of anthropology and human prehistory, which is overwhelmingly cooperative. We have the core teachings of deep mystical traditions.

Jean Jacques Rousseau offered that much of the sickness, the antisocial, and criminal behavior in society was not the result of our intrinsic natures, but of the society itself. Many are quick to dismiss Rousseau with a put-down—“ahh, the Noble Savage.” Rousseau never talked about any noble savage. The term was invented by a mid-nineteenth century pro-slavery American anthropologist, and has been an astoundingly effective little lie to cut off discussion on this topic.

Dionysian anarchism sides with the mystics and with anthropology. It sides with the way that people carry on their affairs most of the time: that is, cooperatively, and generally with a sense of good will. It sides with the spirit of DIY: do-it-yourself. Dionysian anarchists stress that means and ends have to be in accord, and if we can just stop things from getting worse, society will spontaneously realign itself towards freedom. That is our nature. As long as we have free horizons, as long as we are headed towards freedom and not away from it, we can relax a little with a long term view.

Forty years ago poet Gary Snyder, in answer to those who say that cooperative, non-coercive living is against human nature, wrote that we must patiently remind such people that they must know their own true natures first, before they can say that. That those who have gone furthest into deep mind, into deep nature—mystics, meditators, and visionary explorers—have been reporting for several thousand years that we have nothing to fear.

Gary’s solution included Buddhism and other inward-looking spiritual traditions, working within the context of tribal community, and opening to the radical teachings of the wild: wild places, wild animals, and wild plants—the true sources of our culture from our earliest beginnings. Timothy Leary stressed psychedelic visioning. Alan Watts talked about a philosophical sensualism. Ginsberg modeled the ecstatic spontaneity of the dancing bhakti.

But let’s look briefly at where we are.

Despite the pervasive rhetoric of progress from our politicians and media, for most people in the United States, for most plant and animal species, things are not getting better.

Real wages have been declining for over a generation. Measures of the quality of life have been declining. How much someone has to work to get by has been increasing. Infant mortality has been increasing. The percentage of the population in poverty has been increasing. Both the number of people and the percentage of the population in prison has

risen dramatically. The United States has the largest prison population in the world, both in numbers and by percentage. Plants, animals, and habitat are being consumed at an ever increasing rate by global corporations which, by their definition and legal charter, can never have enough.

There is of course an upside—for those near the top of the heap, things are better than ever. There is sort of a choice here, *aristos* vs. *demos*. One can get with the program, stop complaining, and with some smarts and a good birth you can join the winners.

The Aztecs had a pathway for the commoners to gain entrance to the elite by becoming warriors and capturing sacrificial victims in the “flower wars”—wars maintained not for conquest of territory but for just that reason of providing victims. (One had to capture five victims to gain the highest ranking, with its attendant privileges, such as the right to drink chocolate.)

iii. Freeing the Imagination

The first anarchist act is to free the imagination, to cut through our years of conditioning about what is “unthinkable.” By imagination, we do not mean mere reverie, but our imaging of the world, our mental picturing of who we are and the fundamental nature of existence, of reality. This is imagination in the sense that Blake used the word: the fire of consciousness, the fire of mind. Freeing the imagination means that you can act spontaneously in the world, not only artistically but in all of your interactions.

This is not as easy as it sounds. How to do that?

For poets, artists, musicians, dancers, meditators, and visionaries, it is a matter of continuing practice: plumbing the depths of mind, learning how to listen, and then sharing our insights through performance. This is the ancient wisdom of all gift economies.

iv. Ecology and Deep Ecology

The Black Rock Desert was one of Gary Snyder’s favorite places to come and camp long before Burning Man ever came here, and it is one of the major inspirations for his poem “Mountains and Rivers without End.”

On the Black Rock, the environment is impossible to ignore: it fills our eyes and tents and drinking cups with every dust storm. It roasts us or freezes us. On the playa, the spirit of place is never far away, even for newbies who have never heard of Lake Lahontan.

At first glance, Burning Man, with its penchant for fire, excess, inebriation, celebration, sexuality, radical self-expression, and generators, hardly seems a candidate for greenness. But there is a connection—a connection in mythopoesis, at a deeper level than our laudable efforts at recycling and solar electricity and “leave no trace.”

This connection relates to the difference between management ecology and deep ecology. Management ecology we need, desperately, but deep ecology we need even more. The Green Man is deep ecology—his leafy speaking is animistic. Plant intelligence, with its sense of place, and wild intelligence, with its sense of freedom, speaks through his mouth.

The Green Man is the bridge, and the Green Man is madness. Ecstatic madness. Madness that recognizes that the earth is alive. What do we mean by that? Not that the earth is composed of cells with a DNA library, but that the earth is not a separate thing, distinct from our own living minds. Buddhists state that, ultimately, the seeming objectivity of the “external” world is an illusion, that our own true nature and the salt of the playa are not separate. This is the message that mystics and yogis and shamans have maintained for

millennia. Once this is realized, the problems don't go away, but cutting away a hillside, building a house or factory, putting explosives into the earth, are all recognized as having a transgressive nature. We then have a tendency to try to ask permission—what does the earth have to say about what we are doing, the hillside, the animal that we are going to eat? And then we try to make things right, with a sense of gratitude and perhaps a bit of shame, or even guilt, to bring things back into harmony with the spirits. We recognize that we are being gifted, that countless generations of effort, sacrifice, and imagination make possible our birth and our sustenance. So we want to give something back. Snyder states: "Performance is currency in the deep world's gift economy."

v. The Green Man, Dionysus, and Divine Madness

In his last published essay, "Dionysus in 1990," philosopher Norman O. Brown extended ideas of Georges Bataille and Marcel Mauss and others to invert the Marxist focus on production to that of consumption—more to the point, "wasteful consumption." The idea of wasteful consumption is anathema to conservationists (and to all sane and rational people). The idea is, frankly, madness. Brown bets all with Socrates that if the madness is inspired by a god, that is, divine madness, it is the source of our greatest blessings. We might say that divine madness is the "wild" of consciousness.

The name of the god, for Brown, is Dionysus. Iconographically, it is easy to recognize Dionysus in the Green Man, the one whose very speech is wild nature.

Now Brown is not expecting people to actually bow down and worship Dionysus. For Brown, Dionysus is a shorthand for an irrepressible wild and joyful energy. The opposite of this energy is the Grand Inquisitor, with his benevolent lies. Success or failure seems to pivot on the issue of passive entertainment—Blake's "spectral enjoyment." The Inquisitor is betting that circuses will satisfy the masses. The Dionysian bets he is wrong. That is the idea behind the Burning Man mantra "no spectators."

The traditional manifestation of Dionysian energy has always been through festivals. Barbara Ehrenreich points out that in medieval Spain a third of the days of the year were holidays for festivals. There was a backwards day, a Feast of Fools when a donkey was led into the cathedral and the bishop's miter placed on his head. Blasphemies were uttered, echoes of the Dionysian festivals of Greece. The Greeks were wise enough to recognize that although Dionysus meant trouble, the suppression of Dionysus was even worse—that trying to suppress the Dionysian spirit entirely, to end all licentiousness, all blasphemy, all risk, led to false madness, profane madness, and the sacrifice of children. Moloch. That is the true idolatry, when the blasphemies of art are petrified into literalism. The Romans, by the way, an Apollonian people, suppressed the Bacchanalia with much bloodshed—perhaps the first "War on Drugs."

The church made occasional attempts to suppress the festivals—these moves mostly coming from Rome. The local priests generally resisted this suppression, saying that without the festivals they would have no congregation. Festivals, it should not surprise us, were sometimes the springboards for political rebellion.

A harder force against the festival was the Enlightenment, along with mercantilism, and the Industrial Revolution. "Reason," remember. Lenin even went so far as to praise the capitalists for disciplining the working classes.

We must remember that anytime large groups of people can get together cooperatively, it puts the lie to the Hobbesian thesis that people are innately irresponsible and dangerous. That is the real reason that the government insists on police presence—even

though they are clearly unnecessary. Free festivals are a threat to the whole rationalization for the existence of the armed, coercive forces of “internal security.” Such a free festival would be a light to the world for centuries: proof that cooperative living, free from armed coercion, is not “unthinkable,” but the way things should be. Free the imagination!

In Brown’s system (which I go into more deeply in my *Inspired Madness, The Gifts of Burning Man*, published last year by North Atlantic Books), the rites of Dionysus, with their attendant licentiousness, danger, fire, blasphemy, and wasteful consumption (combustion for its own sake), must be seen as prophylactic: they protect us from calamity—the Greeks certainly understood them thus. I like to joke that in a more enlightened age Burning Man would be given a grant from the Defense Department, in gold. The alternative worship, as Brown clearly stated, is war.

There is, alas, no proof for this thesis. The mythopoetic foundation is very strong, but in the end it comes down to a wager. Everyone must choose a square.



Burning Man 2007

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Many Musics

[continued]

xxxiii. Alki Beach Dusk

Dis-illusion, wish for two clapping hands &
 a fragrant, keeping world, crooning cradle
 for every creature, great sugared nest
 of dreams. Dis-illusion nods dissent.
 Live with the lack for one & another's feast.
 Live with the fine dust spread on canvas
 to near a thought of music, & two other
 fists enjoying the way spines snap with a
 sweet thump. Live with no explain of
 flaring mountains to a quiet canyon's glow,
 & what left a roiling surf to remember, & forget.

xxxiv. Roofless

The want shapes like a cross, like a cunt,
 thrums by great song up a mile-high wood,
 some body it up into God & cage this fraying
 thought in brick & edict. See it take to the
 wind & leave but a bright fading noise. The want
 shapes like a coin, like a thousand, like
 a breathless canvas on every castle wall
 & brilliant-cheeked children on average
 one a year. Feel it truer when everything
 burns in a single night & the remain
 collapses into a great sighing heartbeat, clear-eyed
 blue breath, three sucks on a beggar's silver
 fruit, high surf bearding bare limbs
 with freeing caress. The want croons
 red heat around the dreaming body,
 tugs lone torsos nearer, teases with a

little sweat & a sniff of taut shadows. Nothing
 divides us but walls hands build between them,
 nothing obscures but talk & covering. The want
 is old, old, a dark pearl in every running
 blood, fine high moonlight in velvet shimmering
 hips, first touch in wordless shy, ever wish for the next.

xxxv. Discordance

Through ancient broken rock, a dozen
 steps in, restless umber dusk & again
 the elixir's glowing test, something more,
 something else, here is the place of
 red heat, lawless propulsion, great hero
 cut for a jagged thrill, wrenching slick
 in fucking for a coin, telling only the
 biting sea these secrets & following them in.

Watch a hand toss sunshine through an old
 brilliant hour, watch it later try to
 remember & explain, watch it unclench for
 something shared & calm. Nothing settles,
 neither hips nor fancies. World ever high
 for its next take, preacher's pretty little
 shadow, a village burning in vines & come.

Sorrow takes its residence a soft morning,
 a kneel at a time. Sorrow gels in
 the years' shifting soil, fruits through
 many dreams, lets the vista slide a bit
 more toward hoary shadow, a bit
 more. What above now more roof
 than sky. What within more braid than
 chaos. Pleasures on their labelled shelves,
 moonlight in a scented cup, warm & toothless.

xxxvi. *Humility*

Sing it low, sing it blue, knock two
clouds & a rock together, sing it true.
Love when a hand nears, when it leads
with a smiling, luring heat, breathe,
gladness, joy, sunk in world's lust &
free of mind's many gates, now out again,

Sing it late, & later still, think ye the war
bears shop hours? Nothing else, sing.
Twine the hungers from heated places, &
the fears of old skin, & the bloats of
humility's talk, slice its thick fruits for
slight tunes, then slice again in remembrance.

Sing it foul then praise dirt for its truth.
Men raise up toward level with the stars
then a caustic dream of lightning through
the bricks, floods darkest through nearest
veins, an idea of God falling gentle from
its tree. Sing it in terror & greed.

Sing it, many musics, wake, blink,
call it a world & what else? What is
teaching right now, the thick tomes or
the mystery? Watch a twining of any
kind, a mate of faces or lights or rhythms
& ask: what tis? How not carry on?

Sing when the lone hours stagger in
blotting crowds, when some needed pulse
obscured or strays on. Sing when heart's
dearest seems to yearn best only in
recall & regret. Sing when it hurts, &
push a little, bite a little. Sing when it hurts.

Sing through dis-illusion & what poor
hours clarity brings. How the faces still
gaze dumbly along, fiercely, no bridge, not
even blunt talk of the chasm. Sing,
worlds without end, sing, faith in the
fire that fleshes through least hours. Sing,

sing til proven nothing can dash the worst within.

xxxvii. Waste

War never leaves. Like watchers in the
 long grass & erotic hums for pinkly
 maidens, fleshly restless & some deep tongue's
 poison taste for chaos, pushing it ever
 nearer. Two ideas for one acre will not twine.
 Three faiths war for an angle of dusk,

& which way to herd wombs & state treasure
 through the centuries. War never leaves.
 Again an hour when its terror sits light & luring
 upon a king's eye, a near bloodless path,
 a great new shine, just once more. Swift
 the happy conquer, bury the weapons, & cease.

Three bullets took her & two babes in her
 awful clutch. The day was hot & nobody could
 explain. Broken blood remembers. War never leaves.

xxxviii. Dash Point

The human world cooks with flare, want,
 & dismay. Face by face & no word to declare
 what's common. Wounds in a hid sack, kept
 for rare display like a centuries-old egg,
 like a private word for shame. Why this when
 so much other? Why not pool the hurts in
 the fullest moon's light & burn, finally fucking
 burn? Coming back, between breaths of wind,
 there is silence. Not waiting, no yearn, tis arrival.

xxxix. *Lonely Song*

I still wonder why she loathed me,
first girl I loved, when I was nine or ten,
had we crossed some other life or land?

Later I was moved among kin & belongings.
The girl smiled & took to my best friend.
He called me a last time & hoped I wouldn't mind.

Thirty years on does this leaf of dream
hang from any other than my tail?
Anything still dented but my child's heart?

xl. *That Glare*

Find God in the ferment, unlaced squeezing
thighs, spider's midnight web terrored after
a lab's dose, the lost limb of a soldier as ground
& building crack & meet, your dream of that
dead dear one many years dust & not a whisper
lighter. Praise soft forgetting, praise new hungers.

If God y'need, find where the herd is parted
swift from slow, where brilliant dusks painted
in poisons recede for no eye, where a pur for
a chipped red bowl of cream, where two wordless
dress unfacing. A blade, a manacle, an unlocked door,
no explain, the child listens through his nightmares.

No God but in what remains, what touch yet
stains the world, how the universe may be
peeping close or blandly distant. Where you
hurt, what you won't say, why that frayed
ribbon. The high woods in dreaming where the
hidden crawls out or happily crumbles.

xli. Hard Warp

World in evolution, world in ferment,
 world in a deep boil to clean every soul
 from its grime. Tell another, & another.
 World a dreaming picture, long brushed with
 green & blue, hid potent dabs of pink,
 a canvas with a code & a key. Tell another.

World's hope in how the soft affects the hard,
 which word spoken how man to man, how
 each chooses to listen, which cracks first,
 one's armor or the other's heart. Tell one
 more, call faith the needed nimble move from hour
 to hour or an endless terrified retreat.

World breaks down in age & entropy & flesh,
 name the king or conqueror to defy this.
 What remains little summed in the tomes,
 a secret night when two smiling hold the
 moon between them, a louder one when a
 thousand shout in single fist, the last one when

something live lets that go, & something else begins.

xlii. Toward Perfection on Earth

A leaf's green flicker, & a golden breath,
 slow arching moment where restless meets rest.
 Do only men dream of perfect days? Does knowing's
 sting not spark in high-flying waves & secret
 shaded berries? Unsure what to believe & none to tell
 but men-mongers, sure tellers that a mountain
 pictures life, the trace toward perfection from
 base to summit, values summed only in the ascent.
 Yet little heed to the mountain's sense of quiet growth,
 decay, how late sunshine feels when few stride its miles.

xlili. Some Parable

A struck pine shows three new angles,
 the world can do nothing for itself
 but repair, re-create or decay til new,
 the burnt grey grass will tell you nothing
 but still a clue, add in the rusting forest
 tracks busy once a morning, the chemtrail
 several thin figures measure, the waste
 from your pipe to a smokestack grind,
 every perfect molecule, dust reveals the
 web, dreams too, if you could sit near
 & hold your hand while you whimper.

xliv. Warm Piss & Sour Milk

I dreamed a song worth the stars last night
 & fingered its shedding crystal melody, dreamed
 a song far fuller than I can reckon, a song every
 dancer knows when dawn blows out the
 moon & the fruit reins again to its golden feed.
 A dream explaining warm piss & sour milk as sacred too.

Wake & wonder: what remain of the ancient years?
 The desert morning is hot & bluntly says: A ruin,
 a vessel, a tome. Starlight on earth. A mystery
 which does not subside. Luring patina of the
 lost & lingering. The same questions. Most of the same
 answers. What rises, falls, what stays, & how.

Warm piss & sour milk, & everything else eaten
 by a countless hour's pass. Red silk wrapped through
 squeezing fingers, the night her mother & father
 danced under bonfire sparks, drank the elixir
 tarted by pears & strawberries. Her grandson fifty years
 later reading her memories in a ribboned basket.

He's sad that night, alone in a city, dreams a song
 worth the stars, perfect scented of warm piss & sour milk.

xlv. Eleusis

A touch & all melts, to the last remain
 of glance, not a bead or breath left, ask
 how, some shade of tense flesh must stay, clung
 to its hurrying hour, late evening street,
 a red cavern passed, echoing some savage
 century's cry for drums, not a touch &
 all melts? So the dream says, so its exhibits
 of dust, not a mew left, no jewels for
 the new year's parade, no hand to tender
 up a praise of God or a child or a sly
 bloom, a touch & all melts, see the king
 start to believe, start to run. Not a warning,
 nor much a promise, more the dog's bark
 louder as the window's lamp nears. More
 what the most clear-eyed see toward their
 last as seeing no longer matters. Last
 beautiful promise, what comes without a
 preacher's finale. A tan wall, quietest buzz,
 green stem in fluted glass. A touch & all melts,
 to the last remain, now smiling part your song.

xlvi. No Reign

Come the velvet blindness of music,
 the fall to stars upon stars in a
 desert's long plain night, cease of
 echoes & the day's many plodding
 questions, no attention remain for want
 nor war, nothing remains, nothing could.

xlvii. Brink

A winter's day in Cambridge, was it solstice?
 High at a metal table, empty courtyard
 in snow, thinking over what any of it meant.
 Quicking chemicals, lingering happy moans,
 sharpening starlight on earth, sadness ribboning
 then & now, was it Christmas? The fool
 of abiding agreeably in time, sitting there
 now, winter's day in Cambridge, breaths a

dribbling white pudding, want follows away
 with every curved pocket, how heat bluntly
 stalks heat, for staying touch, hard clash
 of hips, the shouting wet breach, all driven
 by a lost fleshly snap & the soil's slow teeth
 waiting. A laugh, another, nothing's real,
 they all say so, every arching mentor in my
 long sky, every roaring fungal hour, every

pretty molecule, where is any of it tonight?
 Was it winter? Was it Cambridge? A memory
 will puff the mind freely, lure near like
 for a connection, a magick broiling in hope,
 then two quick breaths & it sags, flaps away,
 untouchable far. The courtyard now a
 sweating busstop, a rainy seat on old tenement
 steps. Leave the courtyard, unthread its knotted
 sentiment. Walk on, past the coming
 hour, believe always bound for better.

xlviii. Plaza (Remembrance)

Here's what I've learned:

flesh remembers what hearts would forget—
 empathy is a deep nod to shared suffering—
 there is little can be squared with the world—
 arrogance shutters fear's slaves, some don't escape—
 what the heart would most remember lies

 a path through solitude, most dangerous country.

A lone girl passes, with a rose, on night's eager, open steps.

xlix. Question

We meet, we part, we remember.

Remember & wish, call it time.

Feel our flesh among flesh, call it space.

Sleep, dream, some accelerated life, return.

This is return. Morning the foul yawn.

This is home. Some other year, another home.

Some yearn, some adore, & what next?

Meet, part, remember. Time, space.

What remains? A few cupped hours will not break.

The shine, so near between day & night.

What fades & returns by heart's inmost will.

i. Consequence

Hunger roars mind & loins alike,
 nothing plays it out long, unclustered
 burst tames an hour, but sate is
 not ease, & hunger insists the universe.
 Saddle it with mortal bones, strafe
 with stroke & suck, reach higher,

human happiness lies in loving the
 bars, endless singing their song,
 plain & golden. Hunger unites strangers,
 divides others. Call it love, inmost petals
 open to another's light, call it desire,
 sweet douseless wish, call it death,

its murmuring path elsewhere. New restless,
 new sate. Hunger is blood & consequence,
 what persists in great & private hours,
 by every creature's wake & grow. What
 kings may nod & fail to know. Learn it,
 & fear, & the tides, & little else.

ii. Song for Hearts

No frenzy greater than a body in
 love, no dis-illusion possible those
 long, few hours when the world frames
 a glance, deeper than a child's the
 greed for what the beloved bears,
 what bloom noticed, brushed, what
 pinks each cheek, what word, what word?
 What did that one mean? And that one?
 Breathe, crazy one. A dream, sweat &
 crushed sheets. No other, no other.

Later, mourn frenzy gone. Lighter, &
 lesser. The moon never knew, neither
 the cards nor coins. That song, the dark
 tickling one about loss. It knew.

lii. Maybe/Still

What shift between the bones & metal
 of a moment, brutal shove, here & all
 the ignorant praying health the bones
 of their cage, smiling call each fist
 a god's mild caress. A moment, sweet
 holy crash, slave some years to it,

remember a turning face, a devouring scent,
 like bread & diamonds, trimmed up
 in melodies to king coming nights, thrashing,
 lesser years. Wounds pale, blood within
 strides on, memory's discordant fruit
 falls, seeds, new nights of pushing,

bright noise, clinking cheer, twining heat like a
 truth released. The reedy voice is gone,
 the dusky catch of salmon sky along that
 path, long rides to lost homes, what empty
 fingers cried to moony stars, old silences,
 great untamed wilds, brilliant vanquished dust.

liii. Essence

Sea-burnt skin & I waked all night,
 full moonlight & I leaned to the sill,
 many questions, young, many questions
 still, who loves me? Who likes me?
 Will I be happy someday? We lean now
 together, he & I, burnt skin. Tender each other.

liv. Flushing Dream—

Every war nearing tonight, every empty
 hand. What glances close between faces,
 & elsewhere. The music crowds three
 pillars of sweetness around, & late-year
 colors gesture near, nearer. Turn to
 memories of excited faces on a hillside,
 others croon in candlelight, call it
 magic by example & ground to name &
 defend? Every broken branch nearing
 tonight & there is no repair. Wizards
 twist melodies & squeeze a pearl for your
 kneel. Kings bang fists & call your heart's
 fidelity a doubtless prayer. Lovers remember
 or wish or settle close to pleasure's
 instructed moves. What do you want
 tonight? Must whole worlds go? When will they?

lv. Transience

Watch it near & away, what the world
 next offers, what next it will take away,
 or do the shine & shadows distract you
 enough to forget how everything ends,
 some craft sink, some land on strange
 shores & become stranger to themselves?

Reck a scent, follow its fenceless path, up
 toward a full moon's frenzied lean, into a
 bent idea called God, beyond strange shores
 now, wide open eye in love, want furious
 in flesh, call it night's caustic agony,
 straggle into a wet field, a selfish prayer,

or call it sweet gift, berries creamed up
 with kisses, fraternal hunger shared to
 know, to strike that clearest melody, shiver
 up the world with the possible, with an
 invitation, fenceless path, full moon,
 stranger shores called God, love's near & away?

Breathe, relax. World offers, world takes
 away, shine & shadows cross the long
 years humble too, or fall away, matter
 more like sentiment. Kings & preachers
 closer lean, softer & plainer, to what fists
 & whispers try to tell. Everything ends, &

between wars the circles 'round hearths
 thicken. Everything ends, new craft toward
 new shores, blunt urge to crack mystery,
 ripe loins & pens. Everything ends, &
 the night strips open another soul to
 knowing, lets another sink with a nod

& release. Everything ends, even an old man's
 blues, a raging creature in an empty
 den. Everything ends, clearest melody
 shivers up the world, what is possible?
 Come along! What next offered, which next
 taken away? Everything ends, so near & away.

lvi. Dream High

Three trees tipped in the wet
 wind. Two crows howled & gone
 in your next blink. A shadow stretched
 & felt for the needed melody, where
 would the dance begin tonight?
 Above all, no more, a king raged
 one more time, & broke. The night
 belongs to no man, the world belongs
 to no man. Want courses in common
 through all. Kindness most binds. Learn this.

lvii. Two Divans

Skin nears skin, a breath, a beat,
 so close, & yet the blunt divide of
 space & blood, how silence eats the earth
 beneath love, old sadness, what the
 mirror still shows. Velvet hours, near, nearer,
 what still untouching, what worlds unknown?

Years since my new stroke moaned
 her love me an hour, since my brothers
 scrummed high with drink & youth. Years.
 Alone nights twisting on a broken mattress,
 others traveling toward strange lights.
 Is it a girl? A new break in the plane?

Hunger for touch costs many years, want
 for love takes the rest. An arcing
 glare, near, nearer, mapless, no explain.
 Desire consumes the eye until only music
 or despair remain. A lost day, fall colors
 speckled the water. She looked away. I kept following.

lviii. Contraindicative

Where the rest? I wonder who knows.
 Through the crowded metal bark of
 city traffic, hurling freight talking by
 nocturnal wire, past windows where
 the brutal remarks the sweet, hours
 none will recount with an answer.

I wonder who knows, how want's deep
 ulcer, why music's hard salve. Where
 the rest? Warriors knot again beneath
 the full moon, kings remake truths to
 fit easier songs, preachers shill God
 for cheaper than street ass. Do you

know? Shadows rush your floor, cross
 with a live edge. Breathe. Where the rest?

lix. Ferment, Strew

Reck flesh's blunt vow to breach space,
 arc will, bite for touch, know oneness
 by hunger's plain truth, what courses
 common in all, come's flame to soil's
 consume. Oneness, suffering in knowing,
 brilliant breaths of aching music,

how flesh yearns flesh, dark pearl
 in every running blood, ferment & strew,
 how the world punishes, croons wait,
 croons deny, sings it foul then praises
 dirt for its truth. Else, breathe, crazy one,
 wake, blink, call this your world,

prison bars branching beautifully to
 the sky, electric lights guarding against
 too much blind thought. Wake, blink,
 breathe, crazy one. Ferment, strew,
 in that disappearing glare wails some other
 universe. Here flesh watches, closer, feels yon,

nobody sure utters why yet instructions
 for every fenceless path, each new
 molten press. No way on but dis-illusion,
 escape from pockets, through walls
 to other walls, cross a bridge of glass
 & ask: new sweet juice in hard leap out

or in another thousand, ignorant, pounding,
 hopeful steps? Learn it: nothing salves
 the closest wounds, however flesh beckons
 pretty & hearts heat fine. Ferment, strew.
 Breath, crazy one. Oneness rises in both
 I & we. Yearn a print in deepest soil.

Dust stirs up a new one even as another,
 unspent, passes back through.

lx. Creatures Dreaming

Creatures dreaming tonight between
the drifts, what of? what for?
Dreams of grain, of warmth, of union,
what of? what for? Winter's cold, &
colder still in a few hours, creatures
dreaming, drifts cross the road,

how few new answers collect & stay.
Little salves the closest wounds but
still flesh beckons pretty & hearts heat fine.
Creatures dreaming, many musics,
the way is dis-illusion, the way breaks
simple to green songs, what shakes pink

& new. Touch the world again & hear
it moan, hear it sigh, want is
trigger, want is release. Creatures
dreaming, come the fog & ice,
signals gone, everything gone, why chase
the next song? New stroke, new push,

new tighten, & all explodes new.
Creatures dreaming nigh the clearer
hours, turn another side, blood warms
blood, by science & faith. 'Til dawn
everything dreaming, everything closer,
what will be the morrow? What comes?

Creatures dreaming to the last, still
rutless of time's stone idea, still
the world a feeding plain & golden nuzzling
rest, still life need not explain, what's
struck or carried off tonight will fuel
another day's fruit, another mewling babe.

Within walls, men combat for bread &
mercy, ask, take, contrive truths in
tomes to bear the nameless, conjure a
way to play out well, fall in hope.
Dream too, in finer hours, croon worlds
together. Close, dear, let us croon together.



To be continued in Cenacle | 64 | April 2008



Arriving Portland series

G.C. Dillon



Corina, Corina

I had to go to her funeral. It wasn't just to honor her and the fact that she had lived to the age of one hundred, but because I'd known her for all of that century.

Tuesday had been like any other day going to the safe house. That is until I saw the police car, the ambulance and the EMTs roll out a sheet-covered form from her huge Victorian. It was just across the street from my hideaway. I'd gotten off the bus and looked around the town. The bus followed the old trolley line, and the pharmacist and coffee shop had changed into a CVS and a Starbucks across the years. The local bakery had become a Tim Hortons. Change is natural, I guess. And it's my job to make sure that when things change in time, they do, in fact, change naturally. I turned and began my short walk to the safe house, a bolt-hole safe from the Time War.

I had a few bottles of Louis Koch Lager from Missouri 1934 to do a taste test with his great-great-grandson's take on the recipe. I needed some fun as I was returning from a wild assignment to a time-line in which Ben Franklin had been treated fairly by Parliament when he first voiced nascent American grievances. He never radicalized and became the voice of change in England. He was eventually rewarded with being the first Royal Governor of the United Colonies of America. The small button for the doorbell measured out the curls and swirls in my fingerprint and hidden cameras struggled to recognize my face. The lock clicked open loudly, as I stood staring at the scene at her house. Neighbors and some of her children and adult grandchildren stood around anxiously. Her grey-haired daughter looked to be crying. I knew I had to go to her funeral.

—"Sir, there's a turtle trapped under Mr. Sumner's fence. Please, we have to save it." I look down to see a young girl dressed in a plain brown dress. Her black hair hangs down in twin pigtails. Her hands have mud on them and the dress is streaked with dirt—much to her mother's coming distress in this age of washing boards and clothes lines. I believe I still have some of Troy's soil under my fingernails.

"Do I know you, young lady?" She is maybe five years old.

"I'm Corina," she says, "from over there." She points to her house. "But there's a turtle trapped in the fence by the stream."

"Okay, let's go. We have a rescue to do."

The turtle is big, with a shell larger than a dinner plate. It had dug a muddy trench along the wooden fence. It is still trapped. I grab a stick and push, prod, and force the turtle free. Corina smiles widely as the animal begins to crawl away.

—"There's a zaftig, even in that shape," Perreault says.

I look up from my book, a small chapbook by Edwin Arlington Robinson recommended by Teddy Roosevelt himself, to see our new neighbor arrive. A pregnant woman exits the Model A Ford. Her fastidiously dressed husband holds the door. A horse drawn dray, piled

precariouly with furniture, follows it. "I think that term's about twenty years too early. The haberdasher and his wife are going to have a child, and they need a bigger home."

"They could fill that house with an entire brood."

"The child's name will be Corina."

"Was that in the briefing?" He smiles and rubs his newly grown hand beneath the bio-glove he wears to protect the injured body part. His old hand had been blasted off at Second Bull Run by a canister fusillade.

"No, I've met her. Or I will in time."

"Do tell!" He smiles salaciously.

"It's not like that," I say.

—I place my fork on the plate, and wipe my mouth with a real cloth napkin.

"You like our pie?" the coffee shop owner asks. "D'em Ruskies may be able to send up Sputnik, but they can't beat our pies."

"Yes, they're very good," I agree. I wonder if it sounds like I am praising the Soviets or the pie maker.

"Can't beat your pies," he continues. "Right, Corina."

She passes behind him, but glances in my direction. Her brown eyes linger, stare steadily. I smile a small smile, one I hope is sufficiently bland. Her dark hair is drawn behind her head and tied into a bun. She looks tired. Bags draw crescents under her eyes. She scoops up a pile of plates and carries them back toward the kitchen.

I pay my bill, leave a big tip, and exit the shop. She is outside having a smoke break. If I recall you could still smoke in restaurants now. A plain white uniform wraps about her form. It falls just below her knee and buttons down the front. She draws the cigarette from her lips, and blows twin streams of smoke from her nose.

"I've seen you around a lot. I mean a lot!" Does she mean a lot of *times*?

"I live across the street from you."

"But you're not always there. Others are. They're not so nice."

"I travel a lot. For business," I say.

"Fuller Brush man?"

"Something like that. That house is a place for us to stay between assignments."

"I see." She takes a long drag on her cigarette, tosses it to the pavement, and crushes it with her shoe's toe. "I was just wondering."

I try to change the subject quickly. "Been following the Space Race?"

"Not so much." She shrugs. "We don't seem to be winning."

"America will do okay, then falter, then get back on track." I can't mention the Lunar Landing, the Shuttle disasters, or the Martian Colony. These are all in her future.

—"Do you think electing Mr. Roosevelt will help out the working people? My John is only on half wages at the mill, and we are lucky he has that." I met her on the street and offered to walk her home. After all we live on the same block. She mumbles something about being a married woman, but hands me her groceries to carry. I think her smile is coy, too.

"I think he'll do fine." That is if FDR survives Zangara's assassination attempt. He doesn't in all time-lines.

"My father says he's a Bolshevik." She laughs, freely and sweetly. I laugh, too. "I thought my father was going to throw himself into the river when President Hoover lost."

As we walk, I think about what was coming for Roosevelt, America and her. I have

seen/ will see the red tide forming in Europe and Asia. You see, I am a D-Day Dodger just returning from time with the 442nd in Italy. I could speak their parent's enemy tongue with the Japanese-American servicemen: the Hawaiians, the San Franciscans, the boys from Sacramento, the kids from the Internment Camps.

"He has work ahead to do."

At her home, I stop. "And here, I take my leave of you." I tip my fedora to her.

—"Can you help?" I hear as I make the trek back to the safe house. I wear grunge couture thirteen years after the death of Kurt Cobain. I have time-shifted from a place where my wardrobe is only out of fashion, not anachronistic. My rucksack contains numerous buckles and metal fashioners. It had been a time-line without Velcro. I look about. She stands on her lawn, her spine slightly bent. Wrinkles and liver spots paint her aged face. A lawn mower is at her side. "Can you help me start this darn thing?"

I hate internal combustion engines. Especially their burnt gas smell. Give me a fuel cell anytime. I mash the primer button, grab the safety bar, and yank on the rip-cord. And yank. Yank. It finally starts. She takes the mower's handle.

"May I help with this?"

"No, I have it," she says forcefully. "I've been able to take care of myself for years."

I look at her ancient face a moment, trying to decipher the strange turn of phrase in her words, trying to read her tone. I continue my walk.

—"He's got high hopes," comes Frank Sinatra's mellow but cheery voice, as she hugs me. I just got off the bus. I stop myself from wrapping my own arms around her.

"He won. He won," she cries. Grey hairs hide within her black. If I weren't so close, I could never have found them. I look beyond her shoulder to the black-and-white televisions in the electronics store window. They all show the smiling face of Jack Kennedy. She whispers in my ear, "How are we doing with the Space Race?"

I nod toward Kennedy. "I think we'll win." She returns my smile.

—We buy our own supplies for the safe house. The energy cost of even a small time-shift would power the lights in the New York MegaCity for years. I also can get some contemporary treats, too. I find her sitting on the small wooden bench in front of the Wal-Mart. "You okay?" I ask.

"I'm fine," she replies. "I'm waiting for my family. I got a little tired in the store." Her hair is grey, wrinkles shoal about her face like a series of Waikiki waves.

I shift the plastic bags in my hand. My shoulder hurts from my last assignment. I have just come back from the Viking Danemark in Nova Scotia. Vindland was in conflict with the Chinese Colony in what is called Rhode Island in this time-line.

"You know we never had this when I was young. My mother had to visit all the little shops on her excursions. Mr. Bergeron's Dry Goods is now a video game store, and the green grocer is a flower shop."

"And the old flower shop," I add, "is now a gas station."

She smiles. Wryly! "And how would you know? That was decades ago."

—She is surrounded by a group of kids on primitive bikes. She wears her hair long and carries her "high school" books close to her chest. She looks scared.

"Boys. Is there a problem?" There are four of them, ten years younger than I am,

and probably faster. But untrained, I think, my feet facilely stepping into the Crane stance, my hands becoming ready. The biggest one looks strong from work on his family's farm. I'd bloody his nose first. Hopefully worse. Farmboy tosses down a hand-rolled cigarette, and they ride away.

"Thank you," she says. We talk about her education a bit. "I'm going to the Normal School." I smile. That institution will become a teachers college, state college, and then state university. But she will never graduate. Both a young beau and the Great Depression will see to that. Then children, then the exigencies of life.

My remembrances at the funeral stopped when a young woman approached me.

"Excuse me. You're the nice man aren't you?"

"What?"

"You know: I only half believed her stories. Thought they were senile dementia or Alzheimer's. I mean how could she know a 'nice man' who never ages all through her life. You know: an old woman's fantasy. But here you are. I can't believe it."

"You must have me confused with someone else," I stuttered.

"No, I don't. I'm Corey. Really Corina on my birth certificate, but everyone calls me Corey." She did look the same: the face the same oval, the eyes the same brown, the figure curvy but svelte, though the hair was dyed blonde and her fingernails were a jet black.

"Hello, Corey. Would you like some coffee? I'd like to discuss what you know. What you've heard."

"Ugh, I'm a barista most days. I'd prefer a drink. And I do need to get away from the loving embrace of my family. At least the embrace without Grams."

We left.



Arriving Portland series

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



*Secret Joy Amongst These Times:
The History of Scriptor Press,
1995 to the Present*

*"Think for yourself
& question authority."
—Dr. Timothy Leary*

Chapter Thirteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 60 | December 2006

So again to this annual task of recounting a year, the newest chapter now trailing comfortably a year behind the present hour. To describe a year in Scriptor Press's history is to inventory its publications, review them, & then embed them in the life I lived upon that time. Yet the mechanics do not fully circumscribe the process. Biography is ordering, summing shot through with interpretation. One reports that year's shifting terrain from where, & how, one is walking now.

2006 shows me how hungry I'd got for stability: one job, one home, one lover. For its length, & for a diminishing stretch thereafter, I got what I lacked.

It had been May 2001 when last I'd known a steady sailing in bed & purse. From job layoff that month til being hired full-time in December 2005 I'd flailed hard & wild. I'd fallen in love & it had gone badly. So badly. I look at those years now & see maybe an inevitability to it all. How so? Best I can say is that I had to chase deep in my Art's corest ideals & see how they held up to material life's common brutalities.

What I've come to see is that the particular girl I chased mattered a lot less than the chase itself. I wanted to see how far I would go for love, & would my Art hold? I believed it would. I believe I tested my Art severely & it survived. I pulled up short on love, however, unwilling to give over my last for it. Had I chosen love over Art, I'd not be writing these lines. I'd be homeless, maybe dead. Maybe neither, no way to know.

My point is that I arrived in 2006 hungry for stability *for my Art's sake*. That's what mattered most. I don't believe that excludes love for dearest ones, or places, or externals of various kinds. What I think it does mean is that I know what I am, what these many years summed mean now. Of course the tale continues for unknown days or decades to come, & I don't believe I know its whole import, but I think I have at least some clear eye on why I am sitting again in a beat Taco Bell in Portland, Oregon tonight & not somewhere else. Art drove me in 2001, 2005, & it drives me now. A why with sourceless roots for all that claim.

In January 2006 Kassi & I came back from her hometown in eastern Colorado, newly married at her little town's church. It was a pretty ceremony, the church decorated for wedding & holidays alike. I had mixed feelings about taking vows in her church, didn't join it

but did wed by its rituals. Love & marital union requires, I think, an opening out to the reality of another but also a necessary deepening into one's own soul. Two do not become one, in my view, except in creating a partnership, a collaboration between lives. Back in Seattle we continued doing what we'd been doing, but perhaps with a deeper sense of that union.

Having written this accumulating memoir for some years, & published it in *The Cenacle*, I decided in January to pull the disparate chapters together into one piece & put it up on Scriptor Press's website, *The ElectroLounge*. It's in rough draft form for now, but it's there.

On January 28, 2006, my radio show "The Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution" celebrated its 7th anniversary on the air. It's become an annual tradition on the anniversary broadcast to play a double album too long for a regular show. I played Neil Young & Crazy Horse's legendary *Live Rust*. Every time I DJ a show, I'm grateful for it. Some shows go better than others through the years but it's always fun.



In February I finished my poetry series *New Songs [for Cassandra]*. The last poem, "Wedding," took me some while to compose. What I did was build up & up versions of it, mixing in more & more phrases & themes from earlier poems in the series. I wanted this poem to be the crackling summation of the year & some of the work & the 179 poems before it. I even mixed in lines from my 6×36 *Nocturnes* series finished in 2004 & poems even earlier. "Wedding" ends:

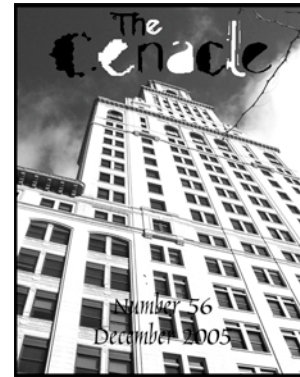
*Vow union again, love at fiercest angles
to a strange, ceaseless war, love a new mother
wooing in the dark, love a prophet yet
unfound by his feeding, believing beasts.
Conjure better to come with backs strong enough
for this hour's truth, & willing for the next.*

*We vow to live this world in all its going beauty,
great, crumbling, how helpless happy it passes.*

These poems were added in their completion to *The ElectroLounge*.

In early March, I finished the *very* late *Cenacle* | 56 | December 2005. This issue runs through with endings and pending beginnings, with travel, with contributors few but mostly long known & best loved. As much as *The Cenacle* is not intended as a vanity project, it is so thoroughly designed by my tastes & idiosyncracies that I see it as one more piece of the autobiographical mosaic that is composed by Scriptor Press & my writings. There are other presences but as though carefully selected & invited to a party.

I like the cover still: a neck-craning shot of the Travelers Tower in Hartford, Connecticut. The park I shot this photo from I call “Cement Park” & dearly associate with my fixation. It was November 2005 when I took this picture, & its companion on the back cover of the park itself on a rainy day. I’d like to believe every individual can find some comfort in his origins, some place or person, symbol or token. Mine was mostly in the places I sat alone & wrote.



Other loved places are present in the issue too: a deeply Photoshopped image of a unicorn sand sculpture from Burning Man 2005 in Black Rock City, Nevada, & a “Last Yawp” page collage of fragments from Seattle, circa December 2005.

Two of my lengthier pieces conclude in this issue. The long-serialized *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, which I finished December 3, 2004, offers its last poem, “Cry (for Cassandra).” Four & a half years, 360 poems, thousands of miles, ends with:

*What lasting? The music of every open hand.
What abide? Love’s every pock, its
countless tugs upon the fabric.
What begins, & a beat, & begins again?
Hope, its mystery rise, its helpless decline.*

*Cry out! What breathes worlds listens,
& listens for you.*

6 x 36 Nocturnes, whatever its worth to a reader or the world, contains my soul in ways poetry never had before. I lived it for years, for miles, when I had forsaken nearly all else. I challenged myself in it, again & again, pushed til its last poems came from a vessel more poem himself than distinct man. Every poem since is a *Nocturne*.

Oddly, because longer in their serialization, my fixation *New Period*’s finale is dated to September 1999, some 9 months before I’d begun *6 x 36 Nocturnes*. *New Period* was in itself beginning & ending. Beginning in that I called it the start of the sequel book to *Cement Park*, written 1981-1999. Ending in that I was finishing it as my 2 ½ year grad school career was nearing its end. And, still more strangely, I finished it around the time I began writing this *History* as my MA Thesis at Emerson College in Boston. Oddly (again), much of this story tells of a psychedelic “many marriage” taking place between my fictional counterpart & Rebecca Americus & other characters in the story. Near the end my character sits with Jim Reality & I say “Eat good food. Listen to happy music,” to which he replies, “smoke good

weed.” And I think, “Of course.” Hundreds of pages to arrive at funny, silly, wise simplicities.

There is an exchange of letters between Jim Burke III & myself. Mine appears in “From Soulard’s Notebooks” & includes my usual ranting: “The years go by & I ask the same questions: how to live & why. Things change? Wherefrom? whereto? Nature & music offer their comfort clues. I write in the face of the Mystery. Am I further along some kind of path, progressed in any way?” Though not directly, Burke replies in kind: “Our soul is tied to the planet & I truly believe we all become stars when we leave the physical plane. The energy we have left returns to the cosmic plane to shine on our earth, just as the tree begins a new cycle with a fresh set of leaves every spring.” What fortune to know such a man, to hold his words in a letter, & to share them with others.

Among Judih Haggai’s poems in this issue is a poem called “Buddha bit”:

*Beauty, it comes in breaths and starts
a gasp, a halt in the flow of time
cosmic crunch—a bash oh!
small steps over lily pads
whish of dragonfly
life is a well-kept oasis*

She covers such incredible, fertile, vibrant ground in six lines, & has been doing this for many years. Funny, subtle, sarcastic, sly. Knowing, humble.

The issue’s reprinted psychedelic essay is called “Psychedelic Rules” by James Kent. His rules are seven in number & well-grounded in experience & wisdom. They bear repeating here:

1. *A single drug can do many things.*
2. *Psychedelics are non-specific amplifiers*
3. *Dose, set, and setting*
4. *Psychedelics dissolve boundaries*
5. *Relax, submit to the experience*
6. *Don’t freak out*
7. *It will eventually end*

Kent’s elaboration on these points is well done but just the points themselves work too. I’ve always felt the best advice for tripping was of this kind. Be safe. Enjoy the ride. It will pass. Of course, conversely, there is what Burke said to me after my first time: it’s an experience like a door you walk through & don’t return from. Both are true. It’s like that.

This issue began an annual tradition that has continued since of publishing the newest *History of Scriptor Press* chapter in the December *Cenacle* of the following year. I can’t think particularly why save to let a bit of time pass so it is composed like history rather than news.

A final bit from this issue. The “Table of Contents” page includes the following note: “Thank you to my partner & new wife Kassandra for the good times and bad, for enduring it all, for a love that does not wave. Another year in Seattle, this one was a hard ride. I want to overleap the hardest place, that of silence, to where everything is told and everything is heard and understood, but how? Why is that place so elusive?”

Early April saw the release of *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 7 | 2005 *Annual*. About 40 pages, a simple, direct volume. Its cover image of a bridge in Seattle, & likewise within its pages are more Seattle images, & a couple of others from the beautifully desolate drive from Seattle to Black Rock City.

My brief introduction reads, in part: “This is the gift of art from our hands to yours, in hopes that you will find in these pages an empathy for some of your best & worst days When the time is right, send this book further along to another set of hands.”

Only a quartet of written pieces, but good ones, representing, as desired, the best of Scriptor Press. The first is my *6 x 36 Nocturnes* poem, “Cry (for Cassandra),” followed by one of Jim Burke III’s letters, some poetry by Judih Haggai, and excerpts from my *New Period* fiction.

This *Sampler* is nicely self-contained; it rolls into the world without need for additional explanation. I thrill quietly at the mystery of where *Samplers* go & the unknown souls who read them. Scriptor Press pushes into the world without impede, the monolithic publishing houses of my youth bedamned. It *presses*, & *affects*.

In late April I fulfilled a long-lived wish for Scriptor Press: I purchased a MacBook Pro laptop computer to complement my two desktop computers. This meant being able to take the means of production along with me, to coffeehouses, on buses, traveling. A powerful machine, made by Apple, the best personal computer company in the world, or at least my favorite. I call her Eurydice & she’s as constant a companion to me now as my pens & notebooks. All work in concert.

In May came *Cenacle* | 57 | April 2006, the eleventh anniversary issue. Such a long eleven years, at least in considering the passage from issue #1 to #57. In April of 1995 I’d not been across the country much less to stand at a bus stop in Seattle taking a photo of an empty shop to be Photoshopped later. Didn’t know Photoshop back in ‘95 either; didn’t own a computer. Then there’s the back cover, a close-up photograph of Kassi’s & my hands on our wedding day, December 31, 2005, in eastern Colorado. I didn’t even pass through Colorado until later in 1995, & I’d had back then only one brush with marriage talk. The epigraph’s image was from a Georgia O’Keeffe painting at the Art Institute of Chicago, one I first saw during that 1995 trip & again in 2006. “Soulard’s Notebook” is a poetic review of sorts of the Spring 2006 *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. I had been there, a couple of times, in the mid-1980s.

Thinking, as often, about what gained & lost through the years. I believe both occur, whether this is mere faith or not. *The Cenacle* of April 1995 & *The Cenacle* of April 2006 resemble each other like distant kin. they share a few contributors, they share an indie defiance of mainstream publishing, though this is easier now than back then.

What gained? Some depth of content. Some reach in audience.

What lost? A *cenacle* close to hand, dear among my days.

Cenacle 57 did, in fact, welcomed back two long-missed to its pages. Ric Amante, who I’d lost touch with four years previous, offered “A Brief Epistolery Prolegomenon to Present and Future Collaborations.” He writes:

*The love will continue as long as we keep dismantling it to marvel at the mystery of its parts.
The love will continue as long as we keep our speculative and lyrical faculties tuned to the night sky.*



Remembering as a way of braving heart onward, curiosity's sometimes fragile pulse.



My friend Gerry “G.C.” Dillon contributed a new short fiction, “Pixies’ Lament.” A melancholy story, where phantastical creatures wonder: “What song will the humans sing anon when we are no more?”

More than their contributors, it was their renewed presence in *The Cenacle* that excited me. The possibilities of continuance, of something more than sentimental recall of other days. I bear no fondness for “good old days” talk if there’s nothing more to it. I *know* men like Ric Amante & G.C. Dillon are still thinking thoughts worth knowing, writing poems & prose worth reading. Their juice still flows hard & bright, & toward it I yearn.

New to *Cenacle* 57 was a further effort to tie it to other Scriptor Press projects. In addition to Albert Hofmann’s “The Mysteries of Eleusis,” in which the LSD pioneer gauges the “true importance of LSD in the possibility of providing material aid to meditation aimed at the mystical experience of a deeper, comprehensive reality,” is Albert Camus’s short essay “Myth of Sisyphus” which is interpreted as an existential love note to endurance in the face of complete futility. Both of these pieces—the first as part of *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*, the second on its own—were part of the Burning Man Books 2006 series. And PDF files for free download of *Cenacle* 57 & all of the Burning Man Books series are available at the *ElectroLounge*. I wish ever to enact a kind of psychedelic idealism in which each mixes with each with all, there is effect, there is change, old & new conceive newer, nothing willing lacks, no creature suffers, the human world’s obsession with some sort of disincarnate divine blows up into world’s confession & confrontation that all is divine, all gestates, none blooms more or less than all others will allow. Loneliness folds its hands & concedes defeat.

Debuting in this issue are the opening three dozen of my *New Songs (for Cassandra)*. Begun in January 2005, little long after I after I finished the 4½ year 360-poem maelstrom that was *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, I determined to write a poem a day, a series of poems for my beloved Kassi, a bit similar to Pablo Neruda’s *100 Love Sonnets*. Shorter than the *Nocturnes* had become, acoustic clarity to contrast their electric complexities.

I didn’t achieve 365 poems in 365 days although I gave it a good go for nearly two months. What I did get was a better ability to write short poems. I essentially wish to work language brief or lengthy to the same ends, breach distinctions like poetry & prose, fiction & non-fiction, til the borders are gone, all a wide sea. Same dream, restated, next clown suit like & unlike the last.

Back in 1999 I was working, pre-*6x36 Nocturnes*, on the idea of mixing poetry & fixtion projects. Let them criss-cross each other as the pages & numbers curve. The project was called *Two Vessels*, its poetic portion published in *Cenacle* 39-40, Winter 2000. Now half a dozen years later the three fiction stories, with similar-but-not-the-same titles, were published. They were as a group dedicated to a girl I knew in cyberspace, now years ago, we would talk until til seemed obvious we had to meet, meet & know the already familiar in person.

A thought here about love, & desire, the wordless canker of want. I recently read a poem by Robert Hass, “Ezra Pound’s Proposition” & the line “Beauty is sexual.” I read this at a local bookstore last night, winter 2007-2008, & have traveled a day with it. Contrastingly I’ve traveled nearly a decade now with the paltry few days I knew Samantha from New York

City. I heard she moved West, became a lesbian, almost one night had gotten on a train to meet me in Boston, didn't. Beauty is sexual. What does that mean, Hass, Pound? The whole fucking world some nights is beautiful, is it sexual? Is the secret name of God carnality? Or carnality, God? I like the latter right now. The secret name of carnality is God. Death is want's cease, not body's. The fiction Samantha ghosts in is long from my pen now, yet reck a line from heart's insistent tug that all is sacred, all sings the single song: listen: it tells all toward which I was hurtling toward from then to now & hereon:

Be not furious & alone, love is coming, it has to, for until the unhappiness mounts unceasingly, the juices are wasted, good intentions breed nothing, love is coming, I'm pursuing this faith myself, it's been bad, may get worse but she's approaching me, can't help it, can't help it, I'll wait, good, good, as I close my eyes I can see Her. She's nearing, questioning, wondering but she's eager & hurrying, one vessel two vessels three vessels, maybe more, we see each other best in silence & blankness, maybe more, but a start, maybe more, she's still hurrying, we see each other best when life is good but makes no sense, here she is at my door best to let her in, my arms open & ready, becoming more still, more & more, I won't move, I have faith, here you come, true love, here you are.

With relief conclude discussion of this issue by noting Judih Haggai's poems, in particular "Middle of the Night," its wisdom is know nothing, nodding, writing it down:

*sweet sleep regrets to inform
can not possibly attend this night
perhaps some other time,
as wakefulness sweeps up dream fragments
and shuffling feet prepare the hot tea.*

In June I updated the No Borders Bookstore Burning Man Books page on *ElectroLounge*. Another friend, one from Ireland, hosts the Burning Man Books, *Cenacle*, & RaiBooks files. The key point here is that Scriptor Press is continually expanding its reach beyond local geography & the limits of print budget.

The ElectroLounge added another Scriptor Press project to its list when in July I began uploading "Within's Within" archived shows to a server hosted by my friend Alfie Ilkins in the U.K. I created a radio page at the *ElectroLounge* which contained the next broadcast's description along with links to download the archived shows. I've now got a regular practice of recording or "ripping" the "stream" or broadcast of the show, then editing the raw recording into a single MP3 file for download. It takes audio editing skills similar but the not the same as text editing skills.

In late 2005 I'd joined a Seattle group called the Zine Archive & Publishing Project. Located in the multi-arts center Richard Hugo House, ZAPP's library contains thousands of zines & underground & countercultural publications. ZAPP is a lively place, kind of a school club atmosphere, hosts all sorts of "do it yourself" activities for people wanting to learn how to make zines & crafts. In July, ZAPP sponsored its second annual "DIY Academy" which comprised many kinds of classes; Kassi & I ran a desktop publishing class. We introduced a small group to using Word, Acrobat Pro, Photoshop, & InDesign to making professional-looking zines. It was a fun class. I'd like to do more teaching work. A brief experience can open one's eyes to a new path, or an old one not yet followed.

July and August Kassi & I spent in preparation for bringing Scriptor Press projects to the Portland Zine Symposium & then Burning Man 2006. This was the second year we'd

brought books to both events. The eighth series of Burning Man Books, #43-48 in the series include: *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, a brief potent essay I'd read as a youth in a used volume of existentialist writings I'd found in the bin out front of the long-gone Huntington Bookstore in Hartford, Connecticut; *A Time to Break Silence: Selected Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* which includes "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "I Have a Dream," & "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence"; *All Paths Lead Where: Selected Poetry and Artwork of E.E. Cummings*; *A Small, Good Thing* by Raymond Carver; Carson McCullers' *A Tree • A Rock • A Cloud*; and *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*, which includes: "How Psychedelics Informed My Life and Sex Work" by Annie Sprinkle, "The Long, Strange Trip Continue" by Jim DeRogatis, "The Mysteries of Eleusis" by Albert Hofmann, "The Electric Kool-Aid Medicine Test" by Terence McNally, & "Number Fifteen: Broderick Street." What is especially contrasting about the two events, beyond the Zinefest's sedate Portland State University ballroom setting versus Burning Man's sometimes brutal dusty desert city, is that No Borders Free Bookstore (Scriptor Press's bookstore for Burning Man Books, *Cenacles*, *Scriptor Press Samplers*, & *RaiBooks*) is a bit more in its native element amidst the semi-anarchy of Black Rock City & its gift economy than the roomful of zinesters & freaks in downtown Portland. Yet both matter very much; both events were successfully attended.



What made Burning Man 2006 more exciting was that we had made some new artist friends who would affect pretty profoundly future issues of *The Cenacle*.

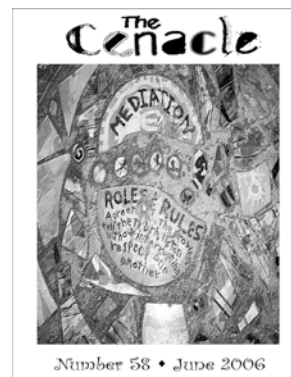
Returning from Burning Man, a couple of days free, we took our time traveling through the Oregon Outback Scenic Byway & even explored an underground cave made from an old volcano near Bend, Oregon.

It took til September for *Cenacle* | 58 | June 2006 to appear. I see its contents as

continuation of *Cenacle* 57's, which I suppose could be taken as a positive or negative thing. Maybe not every issue is going to break ground and, conversely, continuity has some reassurance to it. Maybe neither answer satisfies fully.

The original graphics in the issue are all photographs taken in the Seattle area—from downtown buildings to public statuary to a close-up of a small portion of the Bridge of Glass in Tacoma. I think that anywhere one lives can prove fertile territory for an attentive eye and a camera.

"From Soulard's Notebooks" features the first half-dozen of the *Many Musics* poem series—which brings me to a moment considering what this regular feature is supposed to be. An introduction of sorts, an editor's note, the third of three pieces before the "Table of Contents" after the front cover & epigraph & before the regular body of contents. "Front matter" it's called in journalism textbooks. After the contents, there is what's called the "back matter," which in *The Cenacle*'s case is a rather informal "Notes on Contributors," "Last Yawp," & back cover. I think of the first of these as a series of short tributes to the issue's writers & artists. The second is usually visual & once more directly concerned itself with personal acid revelations, & now perhaps less directly so. The back cover I think of as the complement to the front.



A format, then, a rather elaborate format if not exactly traditional. A few ads, for Air America, for Burning Man, for SpiritPlants Radio. But not paid for, not even official, simply promotions for entities I endorse & wish to spread word about.

More content than structure where the focus is directed. Work published by writers & artists I know & admire, but not mainstream, not even close. Writers & artists more interested in sharing their work, participating in the present day's great artistic ferment than a dollar. Willing to work for a wage to support their art & benefit by its unbending purity, whatever its statements or intent.

The Cenacle would not be better by being more chaotic or less organized, or by forcing a re-creation on itself every issue. Conversely, had it not developed in the years since 1995, I probably would have abandoned it. Worth all these lines, this side discussion? Enough, I hope, to make the following point to any trying Art or publishing: grow with your work, let it grow with you. Restless as curiosity, change and rhythm alike, as nature. Novel & familiar in shifting, unpredictable relation.

Ric Amante's poetry had not been featured since *Cenacle* 48 | April 2003. Among his several here is a poem called "Wish You Were Here," set at an oceanside motel, a deceptively calm place of distant scallop boats & nearby "sagging snow-fence[s]," where the narrator broils quietly within:

*I walk out onto my second-floor porch,
take a seat on a cold plastic chair,
take in all that's before,
all that is missing.*

It's simple, paints mood with words & leaves a yearn echoing after.

A stanza from Judih Haggai's poems also reverberates, does what her music best does, gesturing toward a pulsing something nearby with seeking eye, gesturing finger:

*living a slice of epicenter
a hint of galactic infinity
a song from a symphony of always
painting the now in tools of forever*

She sees time as the fluid deception of relativity that it is, & works with it as a powerful, compelling lie, sees humor & tragedy both in this work.

G.C. Dillon's fiction "Lost Days" is a kind of companion story to C57's "Pixies' Lament." Pixies, again, this time mixed up with a wizard named Megrin in a tale of "missing time," an effort to free souls from a "temporal prison." A sly story, funnier than the last but as finely made.

Another fixation in *Cenacle* 58 is the beginning of my *Things Change? (Six Thresholds)*, a book that took me from 9/22/2000 til 1/3/2005 to write, 600 pages written by hand, as lengthy as I'd ever tried in pages & far more in time of composition. Like its companion *6x36 Nocturnes*, this work traveled back & forth across the country & into some of the darkest woods in my mind. The opening lines spread in infinite variation through its many pages:

Something, not yet word, nor yet shine, yet beyond shadow, no longer blue fancy, I don't know, a game, this cosmos? time + play? something from somewhere, wreckage of a dream, not yet word, nor yet shine, no longer blue fancy—

She turns away. i follow the path her dark blue eyes trace, through lights & trees, through mortal noise, trackless breathless path, i follow wishing to learn, she turns back to me & smiles, I drop, am dropped, then she must catch me too, must teach me, must show me how to learn, not yet word, not yet shine, not hardly blue fancy—

Night burbles fulla details night is secret governance of all, night is scripture & confession, truth & heresy, lights fulla water, flames floating flesh, she turns away again I close my eyes & discover better how to follow, what reveals to be who does not seek—

World not revolving, no, world undulating, world mist & meat, world history & undifferentiation, world the plow & the pen, wet with desire dry with mortality, world floating careening crashing creating music world all music world is all music all music—

the flow of energy into, out of, creation, time a mischief floating nowhere, everywhere, time spun by fear, evaporated by laughter

I've come presently to call *Things Change?* & *6x36 Nocturnes* (& the former's sequels *Why?* & *Labyrinthine*, & the latter's sequels *New Songs [for Cassandra]* & *Many Musics*) pieces of a "double-tryptich." Six distinct works in poetry & fiction yet they flow between & among each other, mixing, re-inventing, I don't see an end to the possibilities & while the first two fixtions & poetry books had limitations of time & length imposed upon them, *Many Musics* & *LX* have none. I don't know if I ever intend to finish them. I don't know if I don't but the question has grown up in me: what separate one work from the next? Each kins to all. I have right now no intent to conclude.

The two reprinted pieces in this issue were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" & "How Psychedelics Informed My Sex Life and Sex Work" by Annie Sprinkle; both appeared in Burning Man 2006 volumes (the former in *A Time to Break Silence: Selected Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, the latter in *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*). The King piece is the text of a speech he gave April 4, 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in

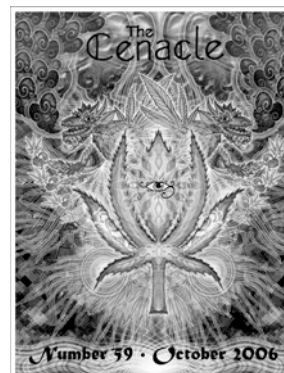
New York City, & in it he issues his first public denunciation of the American war machine's debacle in southeast Asia. He himself would be assassinated exactly one year later.

Sprinkle's essay originally appeared in the *Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies*. Sprinkle, a well-known writer & sex educator, discusses her use of LSD, mescaline, peyote, MDMA, ketamine, mushrooms, & other visionary substances. Their effects on her was profound, altering & re-creating her path. She concludes with delight: "People tend to link 'sex and drugs' because both are condemned by society. Nevertheless, throughout the ages human beings have continually searched for more ecstasy, more sexual satisfaction, for solutions to their sexual problems, and for aphrodisiacs. Psychoactive substances have been used in most cultures because they can be keys to unlock the mysteries of life." I believe there cannot be too many liberation advocates like Sprinkle nor enough numbers of essays like this one. Western society is fucked up, true, but not fucking wide awake & high & happy enough, true. I think I used to believe change would come in obvious, tangible ways, as tolerance & knowledge of sexual & psychedelic varieties spread through the lands, as more leaders & worker bees alike turned on, walked through the door, didn't come back.

Now I wonder if human consciousness paradigm shifts don't happen more like tectonic plates in the earth: effect long after cause.

We want it now, we want it now. It's happening, nearly invisibly. Impossibly, incredibly, great, everyday. Despite doubts & legions defending the status quo. They slow change, but nothing stops it. Waves rolling in farther & farther, occasionally the great monster crash but mostly a few more inches, now a few more. For better? Oh if I could tell!

It was late November when *Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006 finally appeared. Where the previous issue was continuance, this one was much more breakthrough. We'd met some gifted artists at Burning Man & kept in touch with them. On C59's front cover is psychedelic art by Nemo Boko & on the back cover is art by his wife Emma Brochier. There is also work by each within *Cenacle* 59's pages. They run a website called Nemo's Utopia (www.nemo.org) from their house in Portland, Oregon. What excites me about their work is that it is *turned-on* & *superlative* both. The best visionary art does not stumble in craft or conception, in fact re-conceives these for its purposes. Working with myth, symbolism, ideas & images derived from nature, sometimes a dash of obscure humor, Nemo & Emma each produce work of depth & delight.



Another Burning Man find was a contributor who published "Revolution Evolution" in C59 under the name George Dorn. Dorn is a young film-maker, in his twenties, & his essay fires out with the enthusiasm of a radical young artist. I think his conclusion best sums his argument: "...live the revolution everyday. I know this is somewhat of a cliché, but it's true... Time to ramp up your evolution and start your revolution." This essay has impressed a lot of readers since its publication. Reflecting on it, I think that no period of time lacks its fiery youth, or adults for that matter. Idealism is some years more prominent, more visible by events & publications. But it always exists. No night in human history, no land, lacks for a pressing heart, an anxious, restless mind rejecting whatever talk or morals please & placate most. I think even that idealistic ferment brews best when a kingly hand is trying to press down hardest on dissent & tolerance. To be able to think one's own thoughts, & try putting utterance to them, however smoothly or clumsily is, in my view, somewhat endemic to the amorphous thing called human nature. One may indeed in the end, love Big Brother, but there is a deep wish to have this be a choice. Revolutions evolve from a realization among

individuals that none of them have this choice, & are willing to evolve at their own peril toward obtaining it.

“From Soulard’s Notebooks” is a pre-Election Day letter to Jim Burke, jittery with hope, excitement a year or so later I remember with a bit of sadness. Democrats won back the U.S. Congress, millions voted & there were expected victories & upsets. Yet the War did not end in 2007.

The War never ends. The next president will withdraw American combat troops from Iraq, I foresee, but the *War* never ends. One man will always see another & consider whether to gesture to him with open hand or fist. *The War never ends*. As long as one preacher argues another about death, about morality, about behavior. As long as simplistic ideas about difference based in race, gender, language, religion, sexuality are accepted. As long as human nature remains a mist shrouding something, many things, or nothing. *The War never ends* as long as someone hungers in soul, heart, or loins. Vengeance or fanaticism will lure those with a hole deep within to fill, & will seem to fill it awhile, & will not, in the end fill it. I wrote to Jim, in part, what little I still believe: “Beauty happens. Shit happens. Some of it because $X + Y = Z$; some just because. I’ve tried to find what connects one to some to all, discover it for myself or find out who knows. Nobody knows. *Nobody knows*. Belief is not truth. Even fact is not truth.” The War never ends because some believe they know, & would instruct, would lead, would coerce, would command, would crush if necessary.

Of Ric’s new poetry, there are most compelling lines in “Her Radiant Upward Vagrancy”:

*Hunkered down yet moving along
among clouds, birds, misfortune—
inhabiting a stage
whose sky-bound melodies
will lift the ache within.*

Pain & beauty mined again & again become something else, a shuddering mass not monolith, a dialogue not a sermon. Desire, want, laid on sheets, transfigure, music where once bones jabbed through the heart & gut. Amante knows this. Man is too beast to easily stand God above & yet too apart even among his own numbers to walk calmly among others.

Likewise there is among Judih Haggai’s poems a few lines from “I’ll You Shun,” a confusion of yearn & envy:

*Myself, a dry sponge
I drink your sweat and tears
I birth your lusty dreams
you think I’m me, but I’m you it seems.*

Seeming mortal conscious creatures, driven by beastly impulses we hardly acknowledge but by excuse, casting out what we think is elsewhere, ideas, morality, art, vision, drawing back empty hooks because modern human society is an elaborate lie, constructed from fairly ludicrous fables meant to bestow a sense of equality among all, a delayed promise of explain & reward. What have we lost to live an extra dozen years, read by electric light, half dislodge ourselves from the world’s natural cycle of dangers? Yet there is no return, no choice in this. Whatever lost, it’s lost. Whatever to come, hope, if any, & strangely I believe there always is,

lies.

Some artists create from deep inside such ideas, & one of these is Carson McCullers. In “A Tree • A Rock • A Cloud,” her characters make a bid for connection, for shared, for *collaborative* meaning. A man tells a young boy his heart’s wars & eventual surrender, his “science” of retreating from erotic human love back to simple objects, & then forward toward humans again. A barman listens & decries such naked confession. The boy drinks his words & struggles to deflate them with a label.

I review Dr. Timothy Leary’s “Using LSD to Imprint the Tibetan-Buddhist Experience” & find little to say about it. I believe he emphasizes ego, & desiring its loss, much too much, that he talks at times like conventional religious men, about transcendence & liberation. He trucks in familiar ideas & so I do not think of ideas as his essay’s greatest value. I think what Leary does best is to comfort a groping soul wanting a touch to know & keep. He is funny. He is kind. Writes: “If the experience starts with light, peace, mystic unity, understanding, and continues along this path, then there is no need to read [this] manual or have it reread to you.” One knows he wishes well, that he writes to countless unknown numbers *from* this wish.

In early issues of *The Cenacle* I had regularly published “Notes from New England” & consciously picked up & carried along ideas of the 19th century Transcendentalists, applying to my time a like regional value & philosophical continuance. I tangled between wanting to trip with Lennon back in 1967 & wanting to sit with Ralph Waldo Emerson a century before that, debate his young optimism, comfort his later woes.

Revived this feature as “Notes from the Northwest,” calling it a “sequel,” a “hopeful gesture.” Words & images—the former ponders of politics, soul, psychedelics, & beauty, the latter of bathrooms, street signs, glaring nights. I do not fancy myself nor Scriptor Press part of any tradition in the Pacific Northwest, save possibly the long exodus of Easterners cross-continent. Less root, more freedom.

More *New Songs (for Cassandra)* appeared, rip spanking full of old loves, dying soldiers, & poor folk.

Death: “All soaks empty in moonlight/ upon its hour, climbs its beam, falls untold within.”

God: “When the hour rests soft upon your cheek, the faces laugh & everyone kisses the stone pipe in great fraternity”

The powerful: “When/ the whelm comes it will be those who/ sided coin against heart/ iron against/ wood, army against soul, you will be/ buried, forgotten, lost, mounds of brutalised limbs.”

Dreams: “Where why & nonsense dance their lesson.”

And *war*: “Dream—that man’s death so that he/ does not die alone, be his carpet, be/ his flower, will him an after for the/ pain of his end & for the child who/ roared because every hour was still to come.”

There is a moment in *Things Change (Six Thresholds)* when the story changes, when my external world cracked & the crack drove through my Art, through its sky, its light, its soil, its heart:

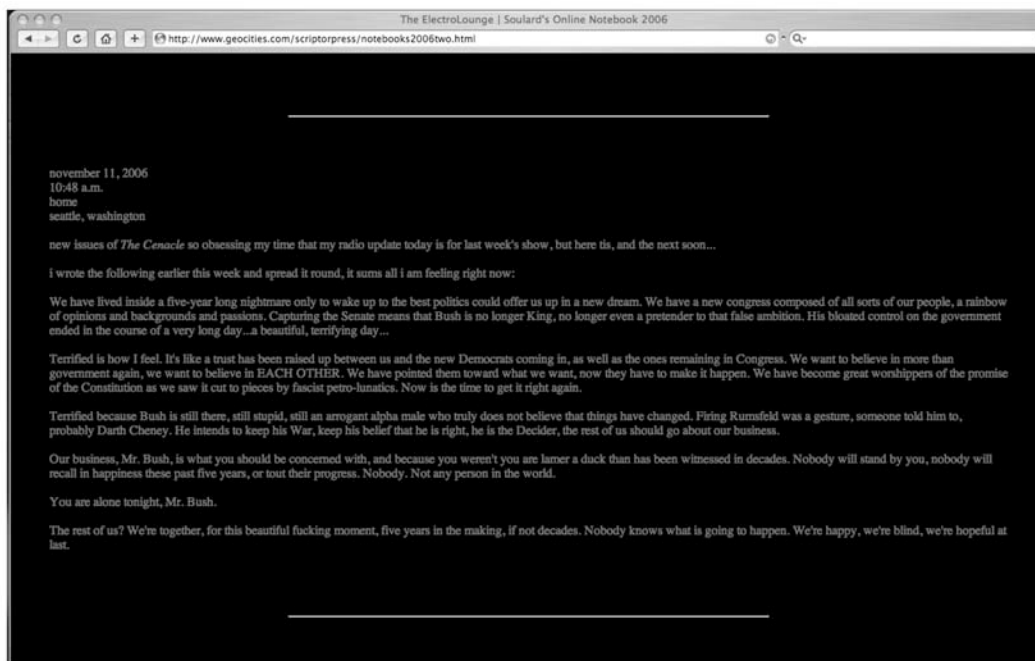
“*She’s* gone...

I disappear too but not very long.”

This was the moment when I believed myself Orpheus & that my Eurydice had been taken to the Underworld, & that I had to go there singing my music to retrieve her. Believed it, built my life on this belief, traveled myself & my Art right into the Underworld for this task

& I look back years from these lines I'm reading, watching as my "[f]ixtion fierces into confession," as "[a]ll begins again," & I know how the tale played, how it got worse, slightly better, much worse, eventually somewhat better & I wonder would I be here if not there? Would I write now as I do if I had not turned my Art into a high flaming ink-colored pyre to a love's lost cause? Nothing lacks its effect, the best, least, & worst of it all. It's profoundly queer to read these lines written in 2002 & then to the NNW images & pictures from 2006... was any of it ever not confession? Not sentiment & wallow, if let burn high enough for tinder or let cool to crumble & feed the next poem, next fixtion's soil.

Arching over the year, in hope & fear, were the U.S. congressional elections. For 6 years, through 3 elections, the Bush cabal had gained, consolidated, & expanded its control over the American government, forcing an illegal war in Iraq & its subsequent occupation; engaged in illegal domestic spying and encroached upon other civil liberties while shrinking the safety net beneath the poor, sick, & vulnerable people in society; & made the world a far more dangerous place. November 2006 was a crossroads when sentiment shifted hard against Bush. Amazingly to many, the Democrats won back control of both houses of Congress. The excitement many felt hadn't existed since Bill Clinton won the White House in 1992. It lasted for awhile.



Toward year's end the stability I'd desired began to come undone a bit. I had some minor health issues come to pass, necessitating an improvement of diet & greater awareness of fleshly mortality.

I also made a request at my work to telecommute like the other members of my project team. We left for Colorado to spend holidays with Kassi's family, hoping this request would come through & a developed desire to move from Seattle down to Portland, Oregon would come to pass.



Judih Haggai



feeding the wild beast

tossed into a burlap bag
then fed to the wild beast
ravenous, well-tuned appetite
no chance of escape
an open invitation

a small mouse in a giant cat world

stan said

stan said, why waste a minute being sad?
i can't say that
i like sadness
i like the heavy morose mourn that falls like a velvet curtain from a 50s stage
i like seeing it up ahead and walking towards it
knowing that it will fall and capture me like a net
i know i'll be trapped helpless for awhile
till i face my captor and cry it to sleep

i like knowing that the inevitable weep
will come forth and part my sea
i'll see my way clear to the other side
and laughter will come so much sweeter

how low now

creeping on bended knees, balls of feet silently hinged
approaching understanding
so slow,
how low now
almost within reach

rain, and mud it was

the smell of green
pine and eucalyptus
puddle reflected crows
november smells grey
huge ominous bomb-clouds
rain so gentle barely there
umbrella upswept hiding truth
wet, smell the wet
rain, and mud it was

incredulous incoming

hard night on 3 pillows

waiting for blissful dreams
i begin to think.

sudden adrenaline punctures mind
helicopters and fighter planes

there's a world going on
& a chance of more

tribal offering

i have lived amongst you
i have never lived
i have always lived
i remember the attachment
i remember the detachment
the human story is waves of seething closeness
and ripping apart
we are drops in a huge roaring lifetime
small beats hoping to find a thunderous orchestra
searching for meaning
relaxing after a sudden joy
our culture blooms from one tribe to the next
we listen to one another
we learn from one another
underneath it all
we seek a common tongue
in many different voices

Plato



The Myth of the Cave

[The great Greek teacher Socrates is speaking with Glaucon, an older brother of Plato. Socrates speaks first.]

“I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human condition somewhat as follows. Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets.”

“I see.”

“Imagine further that there are men carrying all sorts of gear along behind the curtain-wall, projecting above it and including figures of men and animals made of wood and stone and all sorts of other materials, and that some of these men, as you would expect, are talking and some not.”

“An odd picture and an odd sort of prisoner.”

“They are drawn from life,” I replied. “For, tell me, do you think our prisoners could see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them?”

“How could they see anything else if they were prevented from moving their heads all their lives?”

“And would they see anything more of the objects carried along the road?”

“Of course not.”

“Then if they were able to talk to each other, would they not assume that the shadows they saw were the real things?”

“Inevitably.”

“And if the wall of their prison opposite them reflected sound, don’t you think that they would suppose, whenever one of the passersby on the road spoke, that the voice belonged to the shadow passing before them?”

“They would be bound to think so.”

“And so in every way they would believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were the whole truth.”

“Yes, inevitably.”

“Then think what would naturally happen to them if they were released from their bonds and cured of their delusions. Suppose one of them were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head and look and walk towards the fire; all these actions would be painful and he would be too dazzled to see properly the objects of which he used to see the shadows. What do you think he would say if he was told that what he used to see was so much empty nonsense and that he was now nearer reality and seeing more correctly,

because he was turned towards objects that were more real, and if on top of that he were compelled to say what each of the passing objects was when it was pointed out to him? Don't you think he would be at a loss, and think that what he used to see was far truer than the objects now being pointed out to him?"

"Yes, far truer."

"And if he were made to look directly at the light of the fire, it would hurt his eyes and he would turn back and retreat to the things which he could see properly, which he would think really clearer than the things being shown him."

"Yes."

"And if," I went on, "he were forcibly dragged up the steep and rugged ascent and not let go till he had been dragged out into the sunlight, the process would be a painful one, to which he would much object, and when he emerged into the light his eyes would be so dazzled by the glare of it that he wouldn't be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real."

"Certainly not at first," he agreed.

"Because, of course, he would need to grow accustomed to the light before he could see things in the upper world outside the cave. First he would find it easiest to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the heavenly bodies and the sky itself at night, and to look at the light of the moon and stars rather than at the sun and its light by day."

"Of course."

"The thing he would be able to do last would be to look directly at the sun itself, and gaze at it without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself."

"That must come last."

"Later on he would come to the conclusion that it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world, and is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see."

"That is the conclusion which he would obviously reach."

"And when he thought of his first home and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow-prisoners, don't you think he would congratulate himself on his good fortune and be sorry for them?"

"Very much so."

"There was probably a certain amount of honor and glory to be won among the prisoners, and prizes for keensightedness for those best able to remember the order of sequence among the passing shadows and so be best able to divine their future appearances. Will our released prisoner hanker after those prizes or envy this power or honor? Won't he be more likely to feel, as Homer says, that he would far rather be 'a serf in the house of some landless man,' or indeed anything else in the world, than hold the opinions and live the life that they do?"

"Yes," he replied, "he would prefer anything to a life like theirs."

"Then what do you think would happen," I asked, "if he went back to sit in his old seat in the cave? Wouldn't his eyes be blinded by the darkness, because he had come in suddenly out of the sunlight?"

"Certainly."

"And if he had to discriminate between the shadows, in competition with the other prisoners, while he was still blinded and before his eyes got used to the darkness—a process that would take some time—wouldn't he be likely to make a fool of himself? And they

would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him.”

“They certainly would.”

“The realm revealed by sight corresponds to the prison, and the light of the fire in the prison to the power of the sun. And you won’t go wrong if you connect the ascent into the upper world and the sight of the objects there with the upward progress of the mind into the intelligible region. That at any rate is my interpretation, which is what you are anxious to hear; the truth of the matter is, after all, known only to god. But in my opinion, for what it is worth, the final thing to be perceived in the intelligible region, and perceived only with difficulty, is the form of the good; once seen, it is inferred to be responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it.”

“I agree,” he said, “so far as I am able to understand you.”

“Then you will perhaps also agree with me that it won’t be surprising if those who get so far are unwilling to involve themselves in human affairs, and if their minds long to remain in the realm above. That’s what we should expect if our simile holds good again.”

“Yes, that’s to be expected.”

“Nor will you think it strange that anyone who descends from contemplation of the divine to human life and its ills should blunder and make a fool of himself, if, while still blinded and unaccustomed to the surrounding darkness, he’s forcibly put on trial in the law-courts or elsewhere about the shadows of justice or the figures of which they are shadows, and made to dispute about the notions of them held by men who have never seen justice itself.”

“There’s nothing strange in that.”

“But anyone with any sense,” I said, “will remember that the eyes may be unsighted in two ways, by a transition either from light to darkness or from darkness to light, and will recognize that the same thing applies to the mind. So when he sees a mind confused and unable to see clearly he will not laugh without thinking, but will ask himself whether it has come from a clearer world and is confused by the unaccustomed darkness, or whether it is dazzled by the stronger light of the clearer world to which it has escaped from its previous ignorance. The first condition of life is a reason for congratulation, the second for sympathy, though if one wants to laugh at it one can do so with less absurdity than at the mind that has descended from the daylight of the upper world.”

“You put it very reasonably.”

“If this is true,” I continued, “we must reject the conception of education professed by those who say that they can put into the mind knowledge that was not there before—rather as if they could put sight into blind eyes.”

“It is a claim that it is certainly made,” he said.

“But our argument indicates that the capacity for knowledge is innate in each man’s mind, and that the organ by which he learns is like an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless the whole body is turned; in the same way the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at reality, and at the brightest of all realities which is what we call the good. Isn’t that so?”

“Yes.”

“Then this turning around of the mind itself might be made a subject of professional skill, which would effect the conversion as easily and effectively as possible. It would not be

concerned to implant sight, but to ensure that someone who had it already was not either turned in the wrong direction or looking the wrong way.”

“That may well be so.”

“The rest, therefore, of what are commonly called excellences of the mind perhaps resemble those of the body, in that they are not in fact innate, but are implanted by subsequent training and practice; but knowledge, it seems, must surely have a diviner quality, something which never loses its power, but whose effects are useful and salutary or again useless and harmful according to the direction in which it is turned. Have you never noticed how shrewd is the glance of the type of men commonly called bad but clever? They have small minds, but their sight is sharp and piercing enough in matters that concern them; it’s not that their sight is weak, but that they are forced to serve evil, so that the keener their sight the more effective that evil is.”

“That’s true.”

“But suppose,” I said, “that such natures were cut loose, when they were still children, from all the dead weights natural to this world of change and fastened on them by sensual indulgences like gluttony, which twist their minds’ vision to lower things, and suppose that when so freed they were turned towards the truth, then this same part of these same individuals would have as keen a vision of truth as it has of the objects on which it is at present turned.”

“Very likely.”

“And is it not also likely, and indeed a necessary consequence of what we have said, that society will never be properly governed either by the uneducated, who have no knowledge of the truth, or by those who are allowed to spend all their lives in purely intellectual pursuits? The uneducated have no single aim in life to which all their actions, public and private, are to be directed; the intellectuals will take no practical action of their own accord, fancying themselves to be out of this world in some kind of earthly paradise.”

“True.”

“Then our job as lawgivers is to compel the best minds to attain what we have called the highest form of knowledge, and to ascend to the vision of the good as we have described, and when they have achieved this and see well enough, prevent them behaving as they are now allowed to.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Remaining in the upper world, and refusing to return again to the prisoners in the cave below and share their labors and rewards, whether trivial or serious.”

“But surely,” he protested, “that will not be fair. We shall be compelling them to live a poorer life than they might live.”

“The object of our legislation,” I reminded him again, “is not the special welfare of any particular class in our society, but of the society as a whole; and it uses persuasion or compulsion to unite all citizens and make them share together the benefits which each individually can confer on the community; and its purpose in fostering this attitude is not to leave everyone to please himself, but to make each man a link in the unity of the whole.”

“You are right; I had forgotten,” he said.

“You see, then, Glaucon,” I went on, “we shan’t be unfair to our philosophers, but shall be quite fair in what we say when we compel them to have some care and responsibility for others. We shall tell them that philosophers born in other states can reasonably refuse to take part in the hard work of politics; for society produces them quite involuntarily and unintentionally, and it is only just that anything that grows up on its own should feel it has nothing to repay for an upbringing which it owes to no one. ‘But,’ we shall say, ‘we have

bred you both for your own sake and that of the whole community to act as leaders and king-bees in a hive; you are better and more fully educated than the rest and better qualified to combine the practice of philosophy and politics. You must therefore each descend in turn and live with your fellows in the cave and get used to seeing in the dark; once you get used to it you will see a thousand times better than they do and will distinguish the various shadows, and know what they are shadows of, because you have seen the truth about things admirable and just and good. And so our state and yours will be really awake, and not merely dreaming like most societies today, with their shadow battles and their struggles for political power, which they treat as some great prize. The truth is quite different: the state whose prospective rulers come to their duties with least enthusiasm is bound to have the best and most tranquil government, and the state whose rulers are eager to rule the worst.”

“I quite agree.”

“Then will our pupils, when they hear what we say, dissent and refuse to take their share of the hard work of government, even though spending the greater part of their time together in the pure air above?”

“They cannot refuse, for we are making a just demand of just men. But of course, unlike present rulers, they will approach the business of government as an unavoidable necessity.”

“Yes, of course,” I agreed. “The truth is that if you want a well-governed state to be possible, you must find for your future rulers some way of life they like better than government; for only then will you have government by the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of gold, but of the true happiness of a good and rational life. If you get, in public affairs, men whose life is impoverished and destitute of personal satisfactions, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their own inadequacy from a political career, there can never be good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society.”

“True indeed.”

“Is there any life except that of true philosophy which looks down on positions of political power?”

“None whatever.”

“But what we need is that the only men to get power should be men who do not love it, otherwise we shall have rivals’ quarrels.”

“That is certain.”

“Who else, then, will you compel to undertake the responsibilities of Guardians of our state, if it is not to be those who know most about the principles of good government and who have other rewards and a better life than the politician’s?”

“There is no one else.”



Variation on drawing
by Michael Green
Psychedelic Review, 9, 1967

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Things Change?

[Six Thresholds]
a new fixtion

Part Six

*"Life is sad, life is a bust,
All you can do, is do what you must"*
—Bob Dylan,
"Buckets of Rain," 1974.

Yes, & this page will fill up black ink lingual howlings unto whisper tonight I waited for the harm, the slap, then stopped waiting, some other day, but tonight no, & this page arrives rave & mew with hope, thinking how impossibly long & long this story is, fixtion now ragged confession, yes & I suppose still more live from the green coast, endure & more, a wife in many worlds to love & remind me to my task & obsession, sweet thing I cry unto you, harder the trudging than the dancing—

Never rough & low in the full moon's blithe high—

Nearer nearer to the moments dreamt toward perpetual kisses & life buried & blown out in music—

Something not yet word, nor yet shine, or maybe lastly becoming both word & shine, all these funny years come along,

"The way things work is that eventually something catches" sings Noisy Children & twist into a long high jam, come on! something more than another ragged metaphoric tell—more—

I bob up & down, Seattle, Hartford, Black Rock City, Eleusis, let my eyes raise & plunge through a skein of strange places beloved &—

knock it off—

Word & shiny, the arcing fire of music, a thousand thousand blue fancies call up, countless thousands, call up,

I read old pages & wonder what it was about, old years, watch one wife read her novel in a punkass coffeehouse, & another in another world sketch every face in Luna T's Cafe's bar—
which world is true? how many?

a youth passes by cafe doors, he wears an Afro much like they did in my childhood long ago—

Well, maybe—a face emerges, a page turns, I want to lift out beyond bones & muscles, gravity's persist, feel parts of me break away toward other secret places I will not know—feel what I was scatter across miles & hours—what's left resemble some ratty kind of tree—plant me near others, no longer a pen fanatic,

no. Traffic light red & green, can't see it. Sunshine come & go, can only feel it. Music alone in the way the wind shakes me around.

Noisy Children talks of an album & wonders how they could be wrapped in such a way again—

Perhaps I will figure it, they agree, hope, doubt, among many other desires & deeds—

Surrender some things, forgive others, ever a want & drive to play one true note, pitch higher into the burn & feel the shivering magick how it translates miles & hours to something like a name—less day's thrumming breeze—

what beckons raises stronger again—

Art Nature Eros Magick Dream Psychedelia
I speak & feel a good range in this
utterance much contained—

World becomes & again, years in the ever-re-raveling, & a little carries on, habit, prejudice, taste for this or that—

hunch at a table over a notebook, some city, ragged & willing as ever, some plan careening at any given clock—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker sips from his coffee cup, sober as a branch, crazy as a coaster, & speaks: "There is nothing to find the world novel & transmuting. All shines in faint remembrance of another day. One's very flesh yearns for the gone, the utterly disappeared. The passing hour gains or loses its measure of praise by comparison to its ancestors.

"I sit here not awaiting my demise but at last experiencing it. Breath rattles in me not by my will. Thirst & hunger are unwelcome visitors."

"I even confess a rare hour of unalloyed joy, the taste of a rainy dawn, the frank cry of laughter sudden upon the greatest nocturnal depths."

"Nothing presses a soul forward that he may wholly harness & steer, yet conversely nothing restrains either."

"We stagger, we lurch, we know the topography of our secret beings little & even less."

He sips again. I wait.

“Were you to come along to your demise by fullest face & straightest bone, ye must never yield to the lazier urges within, those compelling loose & mild days & them more thereafter.

“Thee chooseth, sir. Now, upon thine seat, later in thine bedchamber. Tomorrow, upon busy pathways.” He ceases. Hardly a high note, but I listened, I nursed at his sentiments, I find late nights open my pores still & any shaman gesture at me flows sharply through—

Art Magick Psychedelia Nature Eros Dream

Wondering at & how pen as ready
for the flare as ever—

Ever there is a war, ever there is laughter, I know, & these pages fill more & less by ways some familiar—

A fat sheaf of pages, over 500 pages long now, & I keep thinking pull it together finally, make it coherent, mix it til smooth, til every stray bit finds its neat spot on an emerging map, all becomes contained, o lovely, o I understand now, o it only seemed a soul scattered mangy over the miles & years—

but it was, I really did travel these pages crazy & in many kinds of danger—

one night told at a worthless employ I held from hunger’s & rent’s threat that I smelled foul & had to leave—the job involved phoning strangers for surveys—O sat in a room of strangers & we dialed headsets & spoke by script—I tried it, pushed, determined, plunged deeply into my task, I was in Portland & had just a chance to make it—just a chance—

I wrote in this company’s kitchen “This universe a mist, a light, a shimmer,” I cried to “dodge the million ways of doubt,” oh tears I tried as the job diminished & no other came, as Christmas came & New Year’s & no hope held, & I felt everything slipping from me, it was more than a lover, more than a city, it was how lost I’d become, how I didn’t know who I was, I wrote & wrote & nothing else held, & then I felt that going to—

a fixation? a something. a I-dont-know-anymore. A hundred pages of pain & more & more— a long thing it shan’t be what it’s not—I sit tonight with my new lover & hope I always call her new—days weren’t meant to pass but to be *eaten whole*—

I watch him writing this story in that kitchen, small & undistinguished, little to say *here* & not elsewhere & I nudge him, it is going to fail here, you are going to fail here this city & leave & won’t be back again a long time if ever years certainly will pass & I know what you don’t how bad things will get soon, weeks, you’ll call for work & none, the woman you pursue will move ever beyond your ken, soon you will be elsewhere & elsewhere—

he turns & reminds me of a night in Portland, a film I saw, long ride by bus, what was it, a movie by Spike Jonez, something crazy & me tripping & I came back to my furnished room & wrote at a little white desk by candlelight—

It was called *Adaptation*, a strange long hair thing, & that night I felt alright, something, I felt upright, I look back now, it wasn't others who did that for me—as staggering & ungainly, I wasn't deep down stupid ugly—I loved all I could—I wish to again—I recede from him writing as he did often in that sorry lost kitchen & let it all play out—his many Philip K. Dick library books, his beat clothes & book bag, his relentless trying—

honor him, his world, this world, every world huffing with beauty & open-hearted hope—

Knickerbocker nods at me full-faced & sips from his coffee mug deep & slow.

beat on, boats against the tide, borne back ceaselessly into the past, some other book, a few words remembered from a half-life between pages—so we beat on, boats against the tide—I sit here & anywhere briefly, nothing gone but everything moves—my eyes in a dream, blah, blah, & my new love this morning at her devotions, I sit at some joint like always in many worlds, Rebecca & I facing each other legs twined on our bed she's fingerpainting my chest, Algernon Beagle is watching cartoons on TV with Miss Chris, Nat Perfect is in his tub with a line of bubble bath & skin loving bottles near him, his chair nearby but not too near—

In some other world I never stop writing *Nocturnes* ever & this morning's:

*Cry for how arms cross & questions
toughen into judge.
Cry for the many leaves thrumming
to wind's bright tickle
Cry for men trudging down ways
with thoughts woe'd by wars
Cry for the news sheets sucking
out a hand's dollar & maybe another
Cry, the world throbs & hurries, berries
& raw necks in shadow for kiss
Cry, nothing gone, but everything
shifts, truth alone in morning shovels
breaking quiet earth.*

Some world a thousand *Nocturnes*,
a thousand thousand—

Cecile Grey in his YMCA rented room sharing breakfast with the building maintenance man. Old enough to have served in World War II, liberated Paris, all that.

“Grey, they sat in our laps, those Frenchie dolls, & fed us chocolate & cheese. We didn't want to leave. Some of us wanted to join up France & Britain permanent-like. Not your cockamamie UN, neither. No sir. We wanted fine French tail as a remuneration for services rendered, you might say.” Smacks his lips. “I married later, of course, & some days happy ones. You know all that.” Silent. Sad. “The only comfort from war's foul days is a soft woman's loving. Hard loving for awhile, then she calms you down.”

Nothing gone, everything moves.

In a better novel he wrote “We’ve got to come alive and aware” kept his music trained on liberation’s constant task, did not lose to time’s several strange twists something like narrative’s tendriled thrust—

I did & good gone for what further I can get to now, clouds above shimmer to reality’s complex throb—

I did & where now is tribe which to run?

I did & everything’s possible but music is the same hard blossom to make as ever—

Music of sugar & kindness eludes me these times. No question. No fence. No wall.

What way there & back?

In a moment eyes closed I forgot back to the dance, the tug among bodies, the raised higher & yet higher rhythms, I brought you back there with me & joined your embrace to mine lonely one—

sloped lawn covered in dancers, we could not stop laughing or crying wildly—the band listened & awhile crazy with us, something other than you & I, them & us, electric colored lights mixed every soul in its sonic brew—

The truth reveals nothing but ashes at dawn. A body sleeping nearby to fetch water for, strum, sing, kiss, whatever, all alone, all suffering, yes, & it never ends, truly, nor does the world’s great fierce to knit, to move one toward another & create some third, toward daylight & then it will have to become night again soon—

I sit far from the dancers tonight, the ones I’ve watched for years now beneath fullmoon’s blanket, the drummers leading each other deeper within, around, over, & away, I sit in the damp grass some distance away, it was six years ago about this time, have I come along any meaningfully? Has the world?

Many shine & gesture to some newly gesticulating day, undreamt rhythms arrived, songs with hardly yet the instructions to sing them, new, strange, big, here it comes, regard this sign, & this, reckon the likelihood & the subtle but brilliant movement in things—behold! a new world aborning, tomorrow or some very near day—

the men at Luna T’s Cafe bar drink on, the home brews wiggle them within a little more so perhaps they sip less & fewer, enjoy more the resulting . . . more—but the ballgame goes on TV, the warrior-bureaucrats in DC continue to govern by bicker & self-interest—some new young piece shakes it to the top of the charts, cries glory me unawares the hands rushing to topple her/him/them/it with a smile, nay, a snigger—

someone prays, someone desperate & sweating on tender knees prays—wind shifting through nearby trees, unheeded voice of . . . something . . .

an absent god easier thought of as residing in empty skies above—

Something happens & again it's more than history or civilization or culture can as words bear—something happens countless times perpetual—

if anything the shift is one arcing over centuries at least—

Noisy Children jams many nights & mulls what tuneful record might emerge from their work—

Rebecca Americus works on decorating every last inch of Luna T's Cafe in as many ways as she can—works a continuous flow of music into odd spots of the old joint, architects shifting zones of silence & tunes, & different kinds of music, sometimes penetrated by, say, caressing a felt-covered fragment of wall, or by sitting in a shadow-bound chair in some obscure corner—she dresses Luna T's in Art, pressing it to breathe deeper, &

No world wholly mine own anymore
& I suppose this means something,
nativity is black pen as ever &
somehow more—

just do the work—keep singing—

A breath, call out a note, many drums, raise it up yah again, even tired hurting tonight works up a tall spark—

Things Change. Things Change? All these years living among these pages & what. What? I don't really know. Some city, its electric seductions glow all night—another city, a bit younger, a little greener—muse, wife, she fusses up a late night meal as my bus nears—

nothing left but the truth its endless strange thrumming music—

A bus & tired faces on it, how many jobs & late hours—I'd say I'm cracking or waning but hard refusal to do so—

long since a chapter heading or a section break—

someone told me she was looking for a book on airports, airplanes, soul's first flight, the thrill of at least remembering the new—mm—

sad—

What word could possibly burst out now that is new, that matters because it does, what yet tugs, what fiercely remains, what blows up still & yes &—

“Does he ever stop?”
“Worse when he does”
“Do things here dim?”

“Not really. He gave us our autonomy years ago. He visits here but not a maker, not the omnipotent hand”

“Why? Seems like being God to someone would be a good deal”

“He figured out it wasn’t. He decided there was better”

“Better eh?”

“Sure”

“And he stopped drinking?”

“That too. That was good. I’ve been where he was. Worse than a bad marriage.”

“What, the bottle?”

“The thirst”

“Ahh”

“Kill it or be its bitch”

“Hard words!”

“Not really!”

So sing, what learned, sing, love’s hard notes, tangled green’s subtle beckon, the few noisy questions won’t free a soul ever.

Sing! Make it up, make it true, make it worth all the years arcing between birth’s teasing remain & death’s quiet away.

Pause, no, slow, never, sloppy, rude, empty seats, lonely sky, whatever, sing, a pen, a twig dipped in blood

think back ten ten thousand years to a calm plain, a dateless dusk, not a flash of exhaust or metal in sight, a fire, some meat, what song this hour, what to tell?

What is singing but a curvy history’s recall?

Reach back, more than this new or the last bloody old century, back to impossible centuries

or ahead to days, centuries, whatever they might be called, some impossible time where nature & mankind’s highest tools have merged, contain each other—what shall singing be then—

Luna T’s Cafe across geography & perhaps time too, places where there is no time—pre- & post-history

How to talk, cry to those other days, help, respond, near, some sort of lashing twist from there to here, now, then, whatever—

summon, conjure, wish it with hard shoulders & longing’s parched teeth—

to write an anti-novel, an inverted roar, a tome neither home now nor—

“He’s desperate”

“It keeps him safely aware”

“He’s in love”

“With her, she waits, accompanies, listens, stays”

Noisy Children in the Ampitheatre no electricity but much acoustic troubling the night's darkling stretch—

something of this book paints cave walls in pictures, something floats in living dreams a soul releases too—mmm—

A book wishing it belonged to both history & prophecy, a book wanting its ancestors solid spectral presences & its descendents intimated in glints—

a book long & lonely, buzzing sad with no cousin or brother books—which its shelf? Whither its room in the grand wall of words?

A book sunk partial into dreams, into the glare of conjuring hands & hours, a book like an offered kiss, persist, jump, hold it precious, hold it friendly out—

Several fire one up & gather loosely near me, this strikes them worthy, this lacks boredom

a book its mentors, roots & branches, its blood moonlight, its regrets' burned sheets of wood & ink—

say cry for what lost
what lost cries for you

kiss the blue eyes soft upon
your face, let go nothing as even
aware the choiceless flow away—

stairs one by one to something called home your hands heavy with food parcels, your mind on a rough-skinned man in a coffeehouse earlier & his spoon & his small pouch, his traveling bag, his various small electric devices, pups, ponies, a sheaf of handwritten prayers

the moonlight above & about the crawling shadows across night's unknowable face, faces—

I stood in a bookstall begging one by one the masters to teach me again, their stories, their directions, their counsel—& none answered beyond a murmur of well-wish

you are on your own, we depend on you now, we dead we cry, who cried toward you & beyond, luck & awareness is all we can say—raise each by the other—

or is that anyone talking but me—

I don't know—I write on helpless, angry, restless, an idealist bent on more than avoiding defeat—

bent on making the song good, finishing it right however the many years, or the countless rotten moments that pass by—

something for someone these ragged sheafs of high notes I call my life's work, its chase
across tick and tock & inch & mile—

struggle, cry, now higher, now higher, love wild or cool, awareness, luck, raise them both by
means of each other——

I think in sweetest, nearest of chambers an abiding loneliness, a melancholic thrum beneath
the daily traffic of human noise

there, heed it—not bloody raw nor shouts of violation, but there—& there—& there—

Other nights, emptier beds, sometimes simply couches or bus-seats or whatever was beneath
& cleared—my pack of blue recalls—mine, bide, & tell of them grimace at best

candlelight & there were others—

Noisy Children deeper into the Ampitheatre where souls & instruments among them harder
to discern & the audience twist into the rhythms & melodies more bluntly & subtly than
before

No time space names any thing

flames below stars above & dancers vibrate to both & more

Some wait these days for the cosmic tide raise up high enough to crash the banks & flood
the prison, fling us to a chaotic brilliant freedom so long dreamed

Always that wait for the banks to crash, rare the occurrence—

someone calls it new age, new world, shift in paradigm, hopeful faces listen, wonder which
book explains, will buy it, will buy two—

harder to keep Luna T's doors open to the world when the world dwindles

yet wonder this book's cousins & idols—

a tired man wild for his pen still writes these pages, whatever else matters anymore

these pages flood me deepest

What to report back to the caves adrip with berry stains lingual shaped & what to pass on to
remade other kinds of days about what this meant—

I don't know. People clot in masses called cities & most live fair to poorly & treat each other
worse—flailing through diversions, & details til it was a life & here's its exit nearing—

much of it asleep to both daylight & dreams—much of it eating sans joy or knowing—

I don't know what I am chasing—glittering moments of wisdom? A patter of true high notes to keep away? A tap-tap from the trees I love, yes, here, this way along—

A righteous curl throbbing pink noise, a faith as undeniably rewarding as chocolate?

Some justice for loved ones' lost limbs & artistic decay?

Something, something, how to live & why. Yawn, growl, press the fuck on—

Another day, reckon, 7 minutes old
by the city's electric flash—

Something. Say it's not all brute
formulae & unscripted improv,
say

skirts & slacks stroll down the
sidewalk, the night mellow with
shallow pleasures, has any time
passed at all?

I wonder, I don't know, I sleep
near a warm woman, in a green
city, yes some things happened—

a friend called writing my om &
I felt recognized,

what secrets left, what beautiful
unknown crevices, & brutal revelation,
tell me, tell me, take me, take me,

neon lights through the streets
tomorrows anticipated

somehow find the ones not, the
good golden tomorrows foamy brim-
ming with else
sing new, how?

Sing new, shatter the song note by passing note, willful faith in the well, always more,
brilliant more, hard, wild, newer, stranger, ever softer the pink melody, ever greener the
roots find rhythms in the dreamest soil—

Noisy Children play fire high play countless winds in the leaves, make their new record from
roaring starlight, five beams the moon has gifted its brother world's ranging men-pups—

A man stands at a podium before ten thousand faces & a million TVs & he speaks, the drinking men & others at Luna T's Cafe's bar lean closer, wondering their land must remain foul with empire's conjurers—

Rebecca sketches in & around my heart, she taps & touches to my beat & breath, pushes, gentles, urges, reminds—

sing new to the daylight not yet arrived, to seeds hidden within intent & even deeper—

sing, shatter, sing & sing—

Another bookstall & I ricocheted from sexy books on shimmying to cajoling covers shilling solace & sometimes I feel sad, no purpose, nothing—

Find myself back nocturnal marauding & it's OK—eh—somehow—

Kings rule by dissuasion & petty merchants suck & grimace, & rare does any given soul sum to much not even one—

Modern life seems to fatten one's deft ugly & pig the eyes, don't look for dancers when most barely wake with pleasure or purpose—fewer words are admired as though the mind cogitates importantly on some other matter—

by day & night autos speed hard along & electric wires rev & harder
comfort by consumption, however empty—

bookstalls stuffed with every loud manner of trinket & the majority of its tomes a glut of nothing—

some other way belongs to some other time but little succor in this—

are humans best off living the lives of tame intelligent beasts?

Sometimes a film shows on a blank wall at Luna T's Cafe, sometimes several, sometimes the same, sometimes not, sometimes as though related, the several films, different rooms, sometimes kin closely similar but for moments, sometimes not, sometimes many watch, sometimes none, & they appear on the wall sans projector, sometimes silent, sometimes Noisy Children jams hard or soft to their images, & sometimes it seems relevant

um—a preacher's crisis in scripture, it often begins there—& perhaps he resembles a very young Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker except when he doesn't—

a crisis in scripture—her voice in the dark—an artist works nearby, has a maybe to run through his oils, chords, black pens, roughs it hard for inspiration, we hear him cry of witches & crows—

she never speaks to the preacher in most versions of the film—in one she does—in another she kills him—in yet another she is the preacher & he's the artist who dreams of witches & crows—

Holy emptiness, it's called, this film's central idea, we see it run through cold fields, twitching alive & more so in murmuring seeds,

Bless everything! comes the scene of revolution & flood, the long pink skies, running & rising, & the preacher feeds his many pets, mostly puppies & snakes, but a dying phoenix in one version, someone told me, I missed that one—

“Three strokes light an eye” is the careening psychedelic crash of lyric & Noisy Children acoustic implosion when the wall explodes in the middle of the film nobody is hurt it's a good scene—

Witches & crows, keeps coming back to them over and over, & a slim volume rests on top of Mr. Bob's AM radio which discusses this aspect in several of the films—

it never ends, this high fucknuttty chase for the next note, jump to the deeper rhythm, groan with every silent moment then

Boom BOOM BOOM!

pen explodes & I am present
where before shit nothing ah
um mm yaz yaz—

What moves one toward another, the film sometimes seems to ask this, when the he-preacher & the she-preacher found a spiritual commune in the desert, they preach agape, preach it hard loud, hand out & around a deep bag of dried mushrooms—Rebecca likes this part, watches all the versions of this scene—

the land is flat desert for miles & their structure stands lone & strange while believers & skeptics arrive though sometimes they do not—other communities form of the ones who never find these preachers—soon seekers cannot distinguish which community they seek—it grows strange—

the rain bring the many communities together—hard & bitter—sometimes the wall showing the film begins to smoke & a fire extinguisher is hustled to hand—

the angle of the street changed, films can do that, & I beheld a cupcake baby in a bin of regular cupcakes, it might be this dreaming again but others around me watch too, & the band rocks hard to what I see—

Scrawls & trails of the film all over the Cafe, & stranger still toward the Ampitheatre, I talk to the preacher one night & ask him—he says it's not really about Godd, never was, it's about being here, this shifting nexus every soul experiences every moment—

I agree & ask about her, he says it depends, no one key fits each time nor any always—do you love her, I ask—do I what?

a crisis in scripture—her voice in the dark—to love one must be willing toward attachment—flow from nexus to nexus slows to fault to fault & ever a circling back—

I tell him that most of my days are strangers for a moment & the next & the next—bookstalls, coffeehouses, streets wide & crowded—

he knows—the pulpit is a tower over unknown souls, a sort of conduit from the estranged to the ineffable—so our talk goes—

she talks to me less—we listen to trees together & sometimes she points out the notes played—knowing my obsession—

a drinker in the bar asks if they're actors or real—I say yes—somewhere a twist between the two & now one—that's my theory—he sips—nods—those who come to Luna T's still see things all the time to challenge, um—

stop she says—listen again—

a crisis in scripture—her voice in the dark—the world too much for simple tomes of thou-shalt-nots—society bulges awkwardly with its clumsily rendered forbiddens as well as its commerce- & fanatic-driven yeas—

her voice in the dark—the rustle of shifting bodies—night breezes lean in through the open window—somewhere a cry, elsewhere a siren—

we discuss the edges of the world—where enigmas perch & cast their effects—she says I don't know what they mean, I listen, I poke around—

I drift into a descending bus on an endless hill, cypress afire both sides of the road—some meaning mumbles close—

Teach us let go, don't know how, praise everything, the hurtest of remembrance, shatter everything upon creation, believe beyond faith & loins, wonder blindly despite eyesight & physics—

Noisy Children my friends & heroes for half a lifetime & going, musical testify between old electric power & tonight's new hard blowing—I listen to them likewise, hold myself to their standard of high—

Greater music, greater silence, contrive the cage & its keys, the scripture & its accelerant, the eros & its diminish—

Someone wonders where next & I shrug, & point with my eyes shut—tap my ragged sheaf of high notes twice, recall other days miles upon the thousand away, what did it, what does it, what can it,

slink down curves of light, multiply, let the drums out of their timely beat, follow slowly the pink silhouettes, the damp path, wonder at the hardest of dreams says nothing is ever

enough until a soul's loyalty is burned into place, praise submission, teach it first, teach it first, only one foremost claims, once burned what else follows lesser & more easily—

hum like silken secrets in this nocturnal embrace—hum, burn, teach, slow & slow—then let go—

the story ended a long sing ago, this must be the next, the one after the last, a story from after—

We sit together, one reading, one drawing, two worlds, many, none—moan, high, mystery, teach it hard, possess deepest, mark unending, let go—let go—let go—

fan blades flick, this & that one argue & laugh, someone taps the books on the walls endless shelves of them—

her blue eyes find me—I keep along—Noisy Children raise it up more for fun—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker rears up tallest of man-wounds & cries from his broken volume: *“The secret of life is metamorphosis & transformation! Nothing within can stay an unprotected aeon! Ancient flames whip maniacally at this day's resisting frost, its high moment passes flayed into oblivion!”*

I read old poetry again & wonder at the creature I was that other year, toward what my vows truly were when but they themselves I still bear—here I sit—penmad—full freak neither old nor young when the pages are filling & near or nearer a high sweet sound rages along in guitar, bass, drums, voice, voices, poetry simple or strange upon the stage here I sit with lingual fossils & what of it—

I sang, a benign face with a broken black'd heart, heeded, I offered, I twirled, I shucked old sadnesses & twas a new day, & yet here another, & none resemble its predecessor, none, what carries along—

what carries along? “No safety, no time, no pattern at all,” he wrote, & I agree, high & higher without ceiling or floor, I agree

The world passes on. Next note, & the next. Wounds heal, or persist, but they change, things change, things change? I don't know.

Franny & Rebecca braid each other's hair, something about dancing in the Ampitheatre after Noisy Children finishes, or with Noisy Children there if the rocking tonight won't cease—

Little things: Bell Rock Cemetery, how I prayed & praised & hurried & paused there—a friend I watched late-night manic cartoons with—the spicy sandwiches the sober Polish folks snapped together—one coffeehouse near the Atlantic, another near the Pacific—

Strange here a late night diner & it's some recovered year & its odd adventures when I ran lone—

a distant town even as here I labor, nothing familiar here, we remain from the beginning
only tolerant strangers—

this book nearer its end maybe it was simply arc, collapse, recovery, what ruins the heart
sheds on its way to renewal—

everything shines here & laughter & clinking & hoary old pop & I want up & elsewhere—

surreal guts of the night, a green city downtown scattered through meagerly, neon sells hotly
to nobody at all, desks & stands & mannequins mean nothing til the daylight, streets poor
with activity—

I watch a man crouch in the coach's far end, eating his meal with a frantic bob & smack

something prickles me write it down—something of it—

Lost between dreams, what now? whither next? Not enough to sing, to know how, the songs
must blow up with necessity, every word a hard crunch, burn sleekly, burn mad, pages white
leaves on a tree made of music—

Old dreams bear little power, are like peaks in a rear-seeing mirror—old dreams neither bite
nor conjure much, they simply bid recall, scabble through dead hours for a glint, revise,
whatever—

pages are white leaves on a tree of music, only new shine feeds to roots—

whither now? what next?

More than forgiveness, more than today's new-plowed furrow, more than any dream's try at
surreal magick synthesis of memory & symbol & loosed reins,

how to live, how to live, how
to live & why—

The bar is never much lit, not by noon or midnight, its twilight induces stupor in some,
reverie in others, one clock only, in a corner if sought—

Some at the bar take drink upon drink, some an occasional glass, some none, there is
no norm, no press & harder press toward some late-hour climactic booze-shaky epiphany—
yet the air is riven with something of this early hour's relax & that later hour's hype—

some wonder for the answers by television's luring beam or the radio's gesturing charms—
some finger deeply into books after it—

I sit many nights at the bar trying to discern what I still believe, what I'm not, what my heart
yearns—some talk to me, take a long or lesser glance at my notebooks—

The floor is old & wooden, the ceiling smoky mass, it is an old bar, I figured that years ago & it was old then—

Rebecca sits near me & lets me writhe as I will—she is available to me but lets it stand there—

Americus & I want to talk more, old animosities long exhausted—

“Will you really make a record?”

“We’ll make something”

“Are you & Franny good?”

“For now. You’ll sometime come around to that again”

“You & Rebecca?”

“That’s no question”

I watch shadows of men & objects late at night—how comfort blooms, the talk plays from frustration to vow to an acceptance not quite resignation—

The mine within is still full of live, raw pain, & nothing lovely will emerge unpocked—nothing—

& the work won’t be easy because it’s never been easy—ever—it’s been moments so high glad wow & years trudging & worse—

& I’ve never cared, ever, & caring now just clogs my further paths-

this is the rehearsal & the show, nothing else, ever, life & art this angle & that angle on the same soul,

ever white leaves on a tree made of music, near’s end faces I know & talk to around me, far’s end sizeless space & dreams which disdain my life’s little interruptions in their tall, brutal, truer business—the night breaks into this angular cluster of hoary confessions & a later time of meal & embrace & warm bedchamber comforts—both demand of me—

something else—something hard & old & it is as much source of any beauty I make as aught—

nothing forgotten or no art that means a thing—

Accelerate again & again, waves hard countless on the shore, & a wish of both new lights & old in the sky, trees & tomes recall impossible old years, & wonder if now’s arcing toward oblivion too & every animate face in tavern & coffeehouse & bookstall tonight a short time from nothing’s conclusion—

What can it be for then? How can the yearn be dressed in words & truly answered?

I don’t know. We want & we sate & we want some, even more. Then bones stiff, remembrancing bites while memories loosen, blood & neurons each carry us along & down, & what, & how, where—

Continuum tries its crush on curiosity—safety turns touch to claw—dreams pick at soul’s frays—worries dust down & remain—

walk down a new street
ask a stupid question
loose the bitching from your belly

Green leaves every year, eggs crack & reveal, someone at his tool coaxing a new creature along, renewal & connection every which kind of way & else feastly—

Noisy Children rocks the Ampitheatre til their instruments rag & time to bury—

There are hours I walk as though none before had ever occurred—among expressionless strangers—in places shineless & secretly ill—no explanation just nameless enemies—I speak nothing resembling truth—wish the minutes to hurry by—

something then something else, call it time or simply change—patience—endurance—

I look at Knickerbocker. “Explain to me humanity’s virtue, how it isn’t a foul sentient virus.”

He shrugs. *“Centuries of sages have no accumulated answer.”*

I try to find in my own ideas something to work with, turn the sound of endless human feeding into a music both novel & familiar—

What touches me still aren’t human ideals or individual personalities—it’s something rhythm or blood or a rising warmth—or—

I watch 3 armed soldiers surround a man & undo whatever he might be in search of. Armed & sanctioned by the Empire, an unconscious swagger, an ego feeding; I watch & feel something like fear but not fear—

I have moments of late when no little king can do much toward me—covens of bitch, trios of brute, something beyond them tugs at me, beyond easy desire,

No rise nowhere to go
No want when nothing sates

I burn down Luna T’s Cafe a time or too then raise it up—wonder what in my world—
old fight, old yearn, old regret—

Days along & then high very high a hum & a rumble I watch the passing mist & much below wherefrom the tattered net of ago whereto the glowing pink palm of hereon & my arm spreads out one side & another marked with arrows & instructions days along & ever the hustles & hope to sing the best I ever could—

the world greys & a moment for remembrance which one it was a sunshine park fat years ago & I loved her like no other like you love me now her voice & gestures played through

my heart then another year suddenly & she & I walk among stores & she loves me surprised by its depths but no bones no map no tune she can pass along—

Another, another, suddenly the sun again & she danced nude in the moonlight & conjured possessing strands all about me

I do I do I do I do I do I do

Now I tell you I love you & the words are brown with years' basting & pink with each moment's new cry into being—I tell you I love you & it means what leaps over & gone while what stills solid & what dances higher, something blind, something brilliant, this day along the arcing currents up toward, you wait like the others if one discards time as a fist—

Rebecca asks me about her blood parents one night, if ever I thought them over the years & I say no she was born in Cement Park aged 4 & Americus met & kept her—& she asks me about now who might they have been—

“They resemble our child”

“?”

“Yes that's so”

So she draws them & I watch, & no human forms emerge her paper, the lines are tall the colors bizarre & she nods with my nodding “That's them” we smile now we know—

A jet plane with a hundred passengers or so approaching a midwestern city from above cloudbanks & setting sun toward the story's last page & whatever comes next—

on the grey wing a red painted circle around a bolt drilled into the surface—there—through this window, hardly six feet away—the arc begins there, center of a world with no center or every center—this secret red circle around its wind-roughened bolt is where the arc described now & for days commenced—this moment, that circle—dark red, ragged circle, window near, wingtip far—

start somewhere, trace through everything everywhere all & no-time but call something a here—its black arrow cousins nearby pointing toward the plane's rear end—its neighbor label

SAFETY LINE

ATTACH POINT

Delta Airlines Flight 679 Hartford, Connecticut to Cincinnati Ohio left at 5:42 p.m. Eastern time why this **no reason** just happens to be why life no reason just happens to be why love why pain no reason **happens to be**

the ground nears mustn't hurry the river sunset-lit, the houses chunky with human wakings the red circle hardly two inches round & the arcing now ground now the thumping now the leave but never leave—

A moment in the desert at the freak festival I watched a figure stand high sailing in the nocturnal blow, ragged shoots of cloth flappings watched with musewife told her this is something later on still remembered & we sat some other night among tales of a school bus

driver & his hound, a new name every day & thus a new personality it was something, again,
I let it go that night

smile.
wake up!
happiness

gave it to the long curly temple to burn, a bag I'd carried of firelight & devils, something,
nothing heals in the world, I've learned, things change (things change?) nothing returns, oh
lorn & long for it, no, a pilgrim walks & shapes & sings a path by wish & fear, things
change? (things change), I sit as far from something beloved as I can, another dull-lit
coffeehouse in some spent city, that night we watched the flapping figure & twined hands
it—

a bag of ragged tales & songs, on my shoulder, within my within, tap, tap, accelerate, tell me
of beauty—or I'll tell you better, tap tap, accelerate—

Frenzy upon frenzy live the happy mad artists, collapse the years to a small painted red circle
& find how little piles within that circle, every dusk wordless, every fine piece of ass, every
long suck of chocolate, hours of decades in dreams scrawled within, the music yowled from
boxes & platforms, miles walked & rolled, beds on the hundreds and rare with bodies—
sun's crush, snow's bite, rain's assault—

What is the sixth threshold? Is it death? Love? Forgiveness?

Squat in a den's bare toilet & no answers. Something about loving the world, something
about better surer rhythms & thus better shine, some blah-blah about the forever possible

a shit makes your stomach feel better, that's all—

the busdriver would be late & hunger & seeming no way to get the kids from their houses to
school by 9 but he would do it every time by flooring the gas pedal on the straightway path
through the swamps & it worked the kids knew it was a secret they liked being in on & the
driver was scary too until he was caught by nosy parents & a speed radar gun & he was fired
but see it was his bus he owned it & the county had no green for another he offered to lease
it to them but any other driver would demand more pay as well he was re-hired & warned to
slow down which he did not as a matter of pride—

his loved one was his dog who developed the idea that he was many dogs because
he'd not been given one fixed name & all these dogs lived inside his head out at the driver's
shack with the schoolbus parked in front of it—

I bet the fat chick there with the penned-on tattoos could tell it better—she'd bring some
real grease & goo to the matter—it would be funny, sad, relevant—she'd finish writing it up
in pink razor point pen in her fat red blank book then take a cigarette break outside, loan
some shady bearded motherfucker her cell phone, read the whole mess swaying on Bee Yr
Slf Nt at the local transcultural bar, the one with three toilets, him, her, whomever—

see this shit sink, see it—

hustle it up again, the music, the surge, if others can sit around a soft chat I can do else, sing, pen, push, something more than casual become the years—

work it deeper & fine, what wasn't possible then, what took all til now to bring out, believe, art in sweeter rhythms, humble happy knowing, within clean & blowing, what's gone gone & luck with it, what remains live & high & so aimed to the task—a goodly prayer for the many years & the coming many more—

vivid remembrance of a moment:

downtown ZombieTown, near the library, across street from the high school, there, bang, memory's stand even more potent than body's, I was lost & years at it, jobless, poor, hanging along, it's all there still, with the light changes of a few years along, I knew nobody, liked nobody, or maybe a few, there was an all-night coffeeshop, they let me sit with notebook & soda, I was a strange pet,

what is it, what was it, rainy night, then, now, that continent's end, this one, shiny streets wet wordless, a dog never able to obey fully, but a dog, but never able, what remains, what next?

Is remembering a cloud upon the senses or a tool for jibbing & jabbing at the future?

I can hardly look on & see my hands curl in decay, my face shrivel, my energy dribble down—

Will Noisy Children disappear entirely? Luna T's? The world is not much hopeful can that turn slant better or can a race forget hope so soundly--

I feel alive & hungry & wanting in a sloppy, fluids, emotional, intellectually capricious kind of way—I don't write fixtion per se anymore or really I don't see it as lesser or other—cartoons & mannequins & crabbed secret rituals all people this world among worlds too—this world of worlds—

Climbing stairs a late night & shits-sick but high on a pending kiss & a beloved music within—

What lasting, nocturnes? Nothing. What abide, love? Something. What begins, again, & again? Everything.

Call it hunger, the clawing rhythm within, maze of heart's ripe drink & need's percussive flail. Breathe, relax. Let the coils loose some, none other way any brighter—

Let the beauty we love be what we do, smile, glow, explode, again, hundreds of way to kneel & kiss it, sky's bright beckoning blue ass, artist clad in pen & faith, great grand pathetic singing bit,

life of trenches, dreams & kisses by spare moments peep a head up here & there—

I watch the fat drunken man watching that old sun set over water, hum, persist, believe, wiggle, years twist around me, he hums truly the unpretty magick of persistence, belief, wiggle,

Nothing is real. Not even a dream.

Band thickens its sound, raises, corrodes, cries, cries, instruments high & unplayed now,
raises, high, let it, let it, let it go, burn these fucking pages, kneel toward the unknown, all
what matters, high, higher

how to live in this world, these worlds, anything, something—how to live, how to live, how
to live & why—

be the flaming thing you are
slide along the hidden hum of the
universe
beg & smile & make it better hour
by hour

Wait. Leaves stir. Always with you.

The night balances toward hunger's most insistent touch, what must, & will anyway, & fail,
& die, & up & here again,

terrestrial music conjure from everything ever known, it hurts, any night too close revealed,
there heart's saddest aspect plain open to any stranger's hard-rised glance

burn it all down again, or else—

Seeking love resembling music, revelation too spirit & sugar, ahh, & erhm, the night again &
its raising moon

Luna T's Cafe, Starbucks Coffee, a moment in the streets of ZombieTown, a dream dancing
with my true love, a more, a shift, I look for hope & hear guitars start up & drums fill
between—

I don't know & allow this & then an angle of light, a light pink scent of lure, better tastes
remind, new words, or old worlds & their new songs—

Cecile Grey reads on in his tome & nods for if Huxley ever meant anything Grey himself
sees it every day when he strolls with his drumsticks over to Harvest Street—

was it the foam in his stout all along that made him glee, not the dark sea below?

I think I wish to confess for others too, sing because I can & will & many won't—other than
storytell these years—I don't know really what it is—but some surely for another, named,
nameless, now, then, words a line out to somewhere, wait, a tugs hold on—

Faith it's been & must be there's nothing else really, sometimes garbed as music, sometimes
a soft cheek awaits its pending kiss, night's slinky lures, what connects all among the
constant advance & recession—

Faith I call it Art & intend to find my way upright along for a lengthy funky perpetua—
intend & shall, within that ragged boy, that lonely man—him & thus every wayward, every
smiler despite & despite—

Faith even love still among it regard my heart's careening vision toward a soft bed with a
yellow blanket & my beloved half-awake in the TV's hypnotic pulse waiting me—she my
golden light—faith, art, love, faith, art, love—faith—art—love—

Faith it's hard one step & the next—
storms cross the path—woe & want—

I brought the best of me to this far end of the continent & the work hardly begun—nights
stretch neon blue & high leaf green far—

I can & will & do—

Call it a scirocco not a book, whirl it up harder & harder, crush every fist & nay along the
path—finish it into the water, in, hard splash, wave, splash, gone,

the band looks at me & turns it up a little bit more—

Knickerbocker eschews books entirely & brings leafs & berries & fish skeletons to the bar to
study—

feel the roots deep beneath uproot some, home is my pen & my beloved, bring Luna T's
Cafe nearer & near—

Pen big in my mind I won't find another way—X the Space Alien reminds me my several
psychedelic visions are true & what I saw was a picture beyond the crumbling limits about
my eyes—

the spy leads me to a door he found ahead of readiness & shows me crazy happy days when
I am writing everything again like new & old both—

bigger what's ending, bigger still what pending thereon—

No revelation, no revolution, no yea for every nay a collar or a formula raises up, just the
music dreaming you on through collision & twine both, & again,

told build up a world from sugar spirit, nod, assemble tools, what?
No? Maybe wrong?

Let it go? See what remains?

I shoot Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker through the back of his head, watch him slump
forward, cries, then will him sit up & continue ponderance of his branch with its several
autumn leaves—

I can I will I do

The music dreams you on through the years & riled & fallen red gold, on & on,

Revolution, revelation, words dead of power & yet the world ever accelerates away on their rails,

again sing worlds brilliant as icycles, up on a box, hands wild toward the sky conjure from some torrential within, feel it feed it, give it all & watch it go—

it all goes, feed a million souls,
ten million more fall & are gone—

Luna T's lifts up from basement to garage rooftop & brought else—where, I don't live in Connecticut anymore, my stories don't either, whatever they are—whatever they were—

the power never ceases, not time, not space, not king, not one lord or another, not quake or blizzard, not, not, not—

I can't ignore or forget, too many pages to believe into this thick ratty sheaf, I press on there is no other choice, none at all—

dance or die, sing or die

A day, a week, nigh a month Luna T's hovers & I do not know where to land her, what to call the place, tisn't Hartford nor Boston nor Portland nor Seattle nor Black Rock City nor Emerald City—I don't know—

I write the other side of this long song closer & closer to its finish til now when I had to return to this fixtion & pay its kindness in my time—

Looking at Rebecca, say: "I finish 6×36 *Nocturnes* in about 48 hours." She nods, smiling.

One of the grizzles at the bar hoists his tankard. "We'll throw ya a party for your poetry! Give you a fine hoorah!"

I think: when I first set to writing few knew my pursuit, & awhile more did, & now I suppose some do but it feels again secret like those years—

The words & music are mine own & I would not expect what this is to delight anyone as it does me—

tis my task, none other—

Time by & here me pen going again the other side of this great shaggy thing took weeks longer than I would have imagined, then click! & it was done, a thing now, point at it, fold it up, think of other things, that's what it all is now, big monster sheaf & done, yet its live unfinish still chases here, so no I have not finished it, or anything, good, high, tap, tap, breathe, relax, go, world ever opens out like an offering hand, three strums & harder, years

shine stranger the farther they reach, offering hand, tap, tap, I carry around some fear & sickness & death with me, look around less familiarly, opens out like an offering hand & think of times of accept & reject,

like morning tossed out from dreaming, there were trucks on the rainy street before dawn & damn I'd sat out that long coffeeshop night in that dank milltown winter, only all-night joint around, I kept going there over some years like many others, they took me in, it was OK, what I did, poor with my library books & frayed hat—

like a tree dazzled in moonlight, growing toward & toward both, eating sunlight & soil, to bury beneath one & join tendrils, dissipate into green—

like the careening noise & silence of a keeping dance, tap, tap, breathe, relax, new strums through new rains, what is the world but countless crossings, shine & shadow,

Liberation surrenders to suffering & stillness. Dr. Knickerbocker studies the mushrooms given him by the smiling girl & boy long hours before eating them one at a time, chewing his way slowly into Godd at last.

Liberation submits to love's tossings, the whiplash of internal starfire. Rich & Franny Americus renew vows of fidelity at the Starlight Lounge—Dancing & Cocktails Nightly—fat old MacFarland's laugh as he thanks from highest high down for the beauty within which they traverse by their love—

Not at peace, dance harder, eat every beat deeper, deeper, the dancer I recall became all roots & branches as the music spun him out & out into the universe—

Faith this pen's cries or habit or fear of boredom or lack of novel intent, commitment the wrong word, even compulsion, no answer for any of it, no answer wherefrom or whereto or how or why—none—here's this rainy night on a Seattle bus & nobody knows—

Things change. Things change?

Feel the world open out in gunfire & poverty, feel the lesser kings anguish & envy the one most girded, the one whose two words are “crush” & “save” back & forth—feel the war crossing nearby streets & not a soul in this bright market remarks how near—feeding on plastic & meat, on the comfort of familiar coins & every pose about them known—

o fuck I wish otherwise! Sheep & feed & drones, is that all any of them are? Scuttling from stall to stall among trinket-swingers, soft, this way to today's sweetest diversion, watch! how they all watch! watch too, move close, it's special, will help, will sing, will make you laugh, remember, hope, take one, another for your best kinfolk, go on, & this too—

peace hustles & snickers close after—dance, coconuts, high on pipes & slowness,

& music lays across every night like a golden bomb—

pause. tap tap. bursts the scattered heart of creation, blows out in fizzing wires & blank baubles—somewhere within bushes of words still fruit crazy—somewhere maybe a story of a man & his can & a flickering lamppost out his window every morning at 3:36—somewhere

several neon signs surround a high, lost girl who remembers everything but where she is—
stories of rain, brilliant machinery, the history of shadows—
somewhere within still waits a book called *Why?*

Write: “Liberation is soul twined, mournful but still moving.” Again. The old men came in from the race track for their coffees & some time to bullshit, everyone one of them full of blustering nonsense, all dead now, the windows looked out to great curvaceous clouds, luscious layers low over the old factory town’s skyline—it was hot, it was years ago, she came through the door like coffeeshops were viral, her eyes clipped my attention & brought me from comfort to company—

I miss everything some. Dr. Knickerbocker chews slowly, no anger, no fear, he might even wish companionship later—

Write: “Slave to nothing. Say it again. You are a slave to nothing.” Again.

There’s nothing left to do but to go on, write it out, find out what happens. This life a gift I figured out some years ago—Art is an open door ever after first passage through—everything matters—every last dot—I believe these things—so go on, write it out—

Suffer. Suffer. Then let something bright & unbidden in, a shift of will & circumstance, another day passes, another, call it time, call it an illusion, startle at how things change & how they do not, let something bright & unbidden in, let it knock about your walls, melody with a face & fingers, a star-drenched sky, branches up higher & roots down low & through, let it knock about your walls, noisy with strange rhythms, cries & confessions & wild intents unafraid of those drone & sheep about them, suffer, suffer! Then tilt your face differently, use a strum of words new, bid the world be kind & hope vulnerably, & reckon the sometime triumph—

Suffer! Then let others in & watch them continue building your world while you writhe. I guage my face, its intentions, its fierce. I should hardly walk vertical & I do. Who am I? Could this ever be known? Who are you? What becomes this beat old notebook a later year when I’m gone? Are these lines for anyone, or anything beyond their pleasure laying down? I truly don’t know. Tonight I bought gifts for blood strangers & far brothers—I’ve seen forty Christmases come & go & it makes less sense to me now than ever—I don’t hate it anymore, or battle it, or embrace it. It happens. A year ago I worked this sheaf 3000 miles east of here, one step, the next, little better then. Two years ago I was a couple hundred miles south of here & flaring wild with pain. Three years ago I was 3000 miles from here but yet another place, a happy delusion, oasis midst a growing spiritual blankness of a life—four years ago the blankness had not yet fully set in—imagine five Decembers with a ragged sheaf I cannot & yet true—the poems are done—they rest save waiting this to join them—

Write: “Liberation watch it flow away & have to follow.” What else? Bus nears the downtown & I forget which one watching the lights—I remember but it does not replace the forgetting—

& I get sick, fall shivering & whimpering a Sunday morning & stay writhing in it for days, & my beloved tends while I vague here & there within, it’s strange to fall away thus, cold & this

is like death & all good will be taken away I know it & sleep & here is waking again neither seems to matter more, & I dream of a book about a man whose reality is changed each time he wakes & later I dream of exploding & wake up here again

A less shaky day of sugar & holiday & walking in tandem with her, this day gift to her, love her from afar as plan for next near, her eyes through hours high blue & lowest, explain the heart of an extant creature to me, explain liveness not simply life & no fucking answer that one either write:

“love them all from afar, & learn how to near” I wish I could I see sheep, feed, & drones—I see instinct & hunger & ego rule, pack devised by stupid maths of race & locale—learn how to near, learn how to near!

Write: “Slave to nothing. Say it again.” Fuck that, sometimes. Slave to body, to money, to want, to wonder. Slave to short skirts etching tight asses & the autumnal slope of a nameless hill & memories of a lost friend’s many accumulated hours of brawling laughter, to colors on canvas, in neon, splattered along a floor, slave to memories, say it again, suckass philosophizing piece of shit, to dreams, to plans, to breathing, to virus & kiss alike, slave & sometimes willing, wild willing slave when sensations rule & want feeds blindly greedy, slave to music, to turned faces, to symbols of power & beauty & hope, slave to everything that comes in & tots up, to all that’s generated back out, slave everywhere & how & when, fuck any other egghead play on the conditions besetting any creature—

Dr. Knickerbocker looks around slowly, twice (twice), looks around (around), looks (looks), yes, this is (yes) a familiar (yes this is) a familiar environ (looks around slowly) (twice) (twice) yes this is a familiar—

“Suffering” I say *“Say yes”* he whispers.

“Say it again” *“It mounts valleys & years.”*

“Say yes” *“Say yes”*

“Then something else.” He nods. I go on.

Something else. Wings, shadows, a turn.
How to live alongside blade, submission,
& passing clouds.

“The world ever opens out like an offering hand!” he cries.

Accept. Breathe. Relax. Once twice.
Work another night of mystery
& stain. Mind reaching out &
finding nothing, everything, both,
scrapping among dreams for guru
glints, secret paths to wider open,
the past a fantastic pretty of
great & mere residuum, one’s body
mostly services until a moment’s snap again
it barks hard from the best

within, will not cease awhile—

Cry out from this world's narcotic
delusion, ceaseless flu of want,
once, twice, cry out! Now breathe,
relax. Reckon all's burst from
flowers of flame will eat these white
leaves til gone, gone as never way,
but what to do now, & whither next?

"Follow me" she says & we overarch the
years again to meet, shared & still
within, she nods, I smile, we agree,
the night burns its many hours, tends
its music higher, keeps at its dreams,
at 'em & at 'em, burst through, now, **soon**—

I dreamed an old friend as though just a week or two, a note recently, the old spicy stuff still
between us, but he had a dream-brother who heard us shouting & didn't like me, & my
friend led me away & left me saying "go home I guess" is that what he did? I dream of
waking up exploding of buildings wide & mangey with labyrinth, home is Art & sometimes
love, hardly other—

As though at the end it could be but confession & raw, another great howl in a life necklaced
by them, as though this story could pretend that readers mattered, that world mattered—

What matters is something nameless not tagged by eros or polity or brute survival—

What matters is never static, never still, blatant & undeductable—one sees it plainest when
highest in its those—confuses it with sex or Art or God—those are its gestures, not they
gesturing—

This whole book has been confession & raw, I stopped being able to take almost anything
seriously—there is too much random in this world to believe everything is human-controlled
or indeed that world seen is all—it is comforting to hint at rewards for pain, great shiny
redemptions for good behavior, but I not believe good behavior is the point of anything but
convenience—raw & confessing, no being is pretty or coherent—the world does not sum up
to anything no matter the nature of the count—

I once thought it was music—but it's not an answer—at closest sparks flying from its
shouting heart—

but even saying that is to humanize & encompass what can't be—

love no more explains itself than anything else—mostly habit & vanity, yet hints of more,
not the answer, there is no answer, but something,

was it Art? Is it still? Most art behaves, feeds the bored, reassures bookish idiots of their fashionable restlessness, or points toward some way, some end, coming or going of days, signs everywhere, it will make sense, buy this & this, so soon make sense, buy this & this, feel it coming together, spend & vote & fuck & feed & stop & go & did you like it when it came?

Rebecca looks in on me & smiles. I think I'm at Luna T's Cafe's bar & it's 4 a.m. Maybe not.

"What did any of it mean?"

"It meant itself. Memory decides by what you do next."

"There's no point to any of it."

"That's not true."

"I'm a failure. That's all."

"By what standards?"

"I'm supposed to care & I don't. Deep down I don't care anymore."

"Then why this page & the next?"

"Stubbornness."

All that has traveled with me are burnt out notebooks I keep filling—that's what I've loved & known when nothing else—

I want to forget limping back to Connecticut, broke, humiliated, defeated, & see how I had to hit bottom to start anew—

I want to believe my best works aren't long ago written, believe this by my own estimate, none other—

I can only believe that Beauty & Music are Truth—but none of that—

"Young Man, cease thy frantic scribblings & behold a moment's deserved peace"

"Neither chaos nor order sum creation's raw, confessing heart!"

I wait but he says no more.

At a place beyond gurus & gods & trees, when one submits but does not understand, no prayers, no conjured lights, dreams nearly but do not—

I don't know anymore if the highest intensity is not now, if my balance is backwards then what?

I never wrote for gain but for something of greater matter. I wanted to know why & believed words could tell me. Believed words could be conjured toward wanted effects—that knowing can evolve, one can trace it through streets & hours—

The agent says “Would you rather a city full of tangles, a known face at every corner? Few know you but few own your obligation or time.”

“Is that good?”

“Is it?”

“I’d like something that felt like home.”

“Here it is. Right now. Home. How does it feel?”

“Like a coffeehouse with closed hours. Like a music device with battery life. Like a job expecting me again & again.”

“Like a woman who loves you.”

“Others have.”

“As much? For as long? Not you. Not since your blood mama let go about 20 years ago”

Tell me what to do.

Nobody tells you. Nobody ever has.

I don’t know where meaning lies.

Nothing directly will answer this.

Paths are not clear or direct & any
that seem so are lies. Whatever is
to be found will seem too obscure, too
disconnected, or too obvious to value.

What irritates, what troubles, what haunts. What’s hard, even stupid. Let false paths ride themselves out. Untrue hearts will eventually tend away.

What remain. What persists. Like or no, mark it. Value & virtue are not the same.

Mark too what falls away, easy or hard, sometimes surprising.

“Use things not people”

That’s not how it works.

“Exactly.”

Is that it?

No. One more. It is always harder to do than watch, to figure when participation means listen or sing or neither—

Whatever truths or answers that exist have always been there & are fresh to each day & night & for every creature—hard to ensure survival, soft because alive & malleable

if you consider yourself part of something more than you, even if you do so with every possible reservation & by countless terms of negotiation, you will nonetheless find a comfort that pure solitariness cannot provide, was not meant to provide—

every moment of your life is of consequence, deepest meanings are everywhere & always

live like it matters

I look at Rebecca. She nods, smiles.

Breathe. Relax. Once. Twice.

Then continue.

Recent days books about secret groups & extraterrestrial origins, half-built towers woven in fog, & the danger of any path suggested by gurus or pages—

Not to understand the Mystery but to see it greater—pause

Knickerbocker my old chum espies the brike & molding, the riven floorboards, the nooks of perpetual shadow, he nods, this is not the whole of it but tis not awful either—if I live writing to be a hundred I suppose he will approach two—I choose to carry Luna T's along even as we change, things change, things change?

Things change. I cannot say otherwise. Things change, slow, quick, sudden, secret, & one is part of it, birth not true beginnings nor death true cease—my farthest, deepest gropings have told me this in countless ways—no beginning no end

I nod—thinking of one cafe toward another—Luna T's Cafe as real as my notebooks, exists in them & elsewhere too—Real like Seattle, my current home, but both contingent too, relative

groping, here, whither next—

“Are we cousins?” I ask X the space alien.

He nods.

“And cousins with oaks & neon signs too?”

He nods.

“All is kin.”

“You knew that already.”

“I'm trying to know it better.”

Silence.

“Nothing ends. Perpetual gestation & metamorphosis of blue fancies.”

He leaves his bar stool. “See you later, Raymond”

Last line of my new poem “Cry out! What breathes worlds listens, & listens for you” don't know what it means, nothing explains anything. Is life some kind of defiance of something greater, other? Sweeping along highway traffic power visible to the senses yet what tis? What? Sun set but night unfolds with its eternal potent. Faces on the bus wait. Doze, read, wait.

What tis? Whither next?

The sixth level is called *Why?* & this book's secret name is *Why?* & the next book will be called *Why?* openly & I suppose that is my question as the pages dwindle & hours few—

Dr. Knickerbocker rests on the couch in the manager's office, not asleep, still beshroomed, breathing fine, safe & even loved, I keep him as both assurance & warning, & as friend, as colleague of sorts—

Noisy Children play acoustic, sitting in a circle among candles & incense, they know more when together & are better when apart for the music they make—I thank them, they thank me—the dramas among us belong to other days & notebooks—

Mr. Bob the barman pages through my Christmas gift to him, a souvenir book about the 2004 world champion Boston Red Sox—he serves a kind of mead worked up by Guy Lemonde—not alcohol but better, magick elixir to the weary workingmen who still patron the bar—perhaps some see pints of beer in their hands til they are ready to see more—

Jim Reality sits with me awhile, strums his guitar as I write.

“This story's title was from you, Jim”

“Ahh”

“I decided that things do change, & maybe this means all kinds of things.”

He strums a little deeper, blue-grey eyes twinkle & lost among chords. I know he is happy.

Rebecca joins me & we sit at the little table beneath the front window—while I also ride a late-night bus down a far highway—

This is what I do. When it's pretty, high, fierce, ugly, awful. These pages & those of my other notebooks have been what has traveled with me all these years.

Eventually we walk into the Ampitheatre, further & further in, holding hands, the whole of creation plentiful, not explained by music or love or death or memory, walk on til we are somewhere pending & we are something pending, there are no words here & this narrative stays behind awhile til we return to it—

I learned with my endless book of poems kin to this book of fixtion that endings are hard & must be fought for & toward, & tonight wanting to finish this book cleanly at year's end I'm not going to because it's not there yet those words that are its last words high enough good enough—

the bar at Luna T's Cafe roars with New Year's Eve cheer, & in the bandroom Noisy Children kicks out an all-oldies night, jumping from Beatles to Who to Pink Floyd to Cream to Traffic to Hendrix & elsewhere, song after song without a bead of try, it's some year ending some other night, & they tune in to the change only humans can feel or know—

I sit there & somewhere else too sit there & here & see how nothing ends nothing begins everything changes & everything changes?

I'm going to keep on it my pen is too young & nutty to stop I hang on & hope—

Something, not yet word, nor yet shine, yet beyond shadow, no longer blue fancy, i don't know, a game, this cosmos? time + play? something from somewhere, recover of a dream, word then another, shine, again, blue fancy, now more—

She turns away, i follow the path her dark blue eyes trace, followed them, call it miles & years & what? Word, then another. Sunsets through electric chords & neon dancing, i love you, say again, i love you, & again, never stops the punch's effect, i love you

Night burbles fulla details, every one, nights on coming & fleeing buses, nights in arms & none, nights that didn't end until the smokers were under a dawn tree exchanging thoughts—

World not revolving, no, world undulating, mist & meat, yes, both, I still believe that, dreams nor psychedelic space nor the basest of hungry desperate moments have convinced me other than: mist & meat—

all music world is all music, flow of energy into, out of creation, nothing ends, everything changes, mass explodes & scatter over the many worlds, words explode & worlds become one, explode, explode, energy builds to burst & release, & again, & again, call it a single man's wisdom or a civilization, creation leads to explosion leads to dissipation it won't stop—

I sit at the corner of the bar shortly after New Year's Day 2005. What a cartoonish sounding name for a year.

"Why not call it Frederick? Or Blackfoot? Or Funk-a-doodle-doo?"

Americus laughs. "You finally figured out the secret"

"Eh?"

He looks at me, smiling, open as he's ever been to me.

"Not to take it all so seriously"

"Is that it?"

The drinking men at the bar nod among themselves. Mr. Bob the barman just looks at me.

"Your choice though, Son. Always."

I nod.

Walking into the night air I am free. Done it. Told this one. Right to its last page. Took it mighty seriously. Now letting it go.

Walking into the night air & I tell who I was, OK. This is good. I've made it.

Whatever comes, my pen & I did not let down our dream, our music, it hurt, it healed, here it is, still, world here, all music, all music, all music, love & clarity.



1-3-2005

Seattle, Washington





Ecuador Hotel

VI

Skype, though not as well-travelled as Federico, had managed to cover some curious terrain. His customary method was a piercing, microcosmic analysis of the thing at hand, the results of which would allude to another thing, bound to a third, a fourth, a tenth—a billionth if time allowed. And then a cut back to the defining energy of the moment in all its bliss, horror, and inscrutability. This moment found Skype ambling down the metal tongue of the ferry past slender sheaves of pilings, the cold green water luscious in strong sunlight. He had no doubt Federico was nearby, and the imminence of their meeting both disturbed and excited him. Disturbing because engagement might soften his edge, exciting because engagement might hone it. As it was, this was destiny, as hard-wired in Skype's skull as hunger. How and when it comes less an unsought miracle than test of faith. Prototypes had arisen, been embraced, flourished, withered, entered the bloodstream—the messages all potent, transformative, transitory. A stronger alchemy that would sift, valorize, and sing the days was in order. Hence Skype up before dawn fixing himself an instant coffee in a blue metal cup with hot tap-water from the corner sink. Sitting in the one chair by the one table by the only window, entering the daylight silent, empty, and grateful. Gravitating, then, to a sink in a Hell's Kitchen room that lay flat on the floor, it's basin bone-dry and clotted with lumps of gray plaster. And on to a fountain and pool in the parking lot of a low-slung, tan cinderblock motel wherein they immersed their drunken, unfettered selves one salacious morning. And now this cute corner sink with the right angle and cartwheel faucets and handfuls of cold water splashed over the face to make ready to pad down the droopy hallways of the Ecuador and head to the piers in slant-rose light for the 6:20 ferry to the island.



Raymond Souland, Jr.

Notes from the Northwest

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), and resumed after a long absence in issue 59 (October 2006). It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

**November 7, 2007
Portland, Oregon**

I want to fill 10 pages in the next 55 or so minutes that will serve as template & starting point for why I ended up again in Portland, this was where I had many of my deepest, lowest moments, I was so poor I begged kin for money & was eventually told to go on welfare, & I tried, & that didn't work either, nothing did, when I left I had little but my Art, my heart was broken, my hopes gone. It was simple: I'd rolled my West Coast dreams & a romance together, & gambled to loss. Unlike Boston where I fled from a broken heart. So I thought of how low, how nearly gone I was 5 years ago here, yet got up every day & kept trying, it was hard, this place is already deeply embedded for me in all that yet there was another aspect of it, I kept writing, I had good, high hours, I wrote & read & listened to music, TV & movies, I didn't stop—all this is to me the myth as I've culled it since—it's true enough—but why return, why not somewhere new? Why not old dream San Francisco?

I've always looked for the hidden, what eludes the easy, common glance. Something in this area like that, visible but not, it doesn't give me a path, even a first word to articulate, but it's close to me, that & my ideas of the Beast & the White Woods & tameless hours—I think this place's map & these ideas are a beginning—

I've been stumbling lately in my Art, not in making it but in the interferences of doubt—

Slowing, not two pages in, my problem is I am unsure. I can keep going but this isn't enough—what compelling, what the mad necessity? I know a few here a bit . . . an idea to bring them together gets at me, bring them together, see what happens—

Slow again, distracted by color & movement. I acknowledge there are hungers of mind & flesh, & maybe others not so discernable—

Each step is a first & last of its kind, I want one I can call path's beginning—

Maybe path as twine of thoughts, steps, what pushed toward, what pulled toward, how fears fence, how hungers rake deeply—old with much in my head, old with much in my body,

a pause to read, an old hunger & pleasure, will this be 10 pgs in such a short time when I can't figure any why—

maybe there is no why but simply a curiosity, a pursuit toward what draws, what is pulling & pulling, what is it pulling & pulling? I think it's rooted in long-gone days, child's days, years I natively loved followed by years I loathed & both half-crown me still—their lesson, their view of what things happen & how—in my childhood, gangs ran together & were kin, I belonged & played my changing part but always there was a place for me. Later I had no place & I stood years with other outcasts, & this dissipated as it simply isn't enough to feed beyond the cage's reach—thinking about it now, childhood's end was more that of time than space. In adulthood I suppose I created a hybrid group, outcasts but with a same taste for games as I had. Called it Art, it had always been Art. It still is Art even as again another group broke apart. It was the both time & space this time. People change, more near & then away.

Which leads me here, a place I've returned to, with expectations, barely able to describe them but here I am.

What needed now? I don't know, I go around & return to it. My time is nearly gone & I have no answer for it.

Go slower.

Be alert.

Build kin.

Patience.

Turn a new direction.

Be a little kinder.

I just don't know but when I push myself the words are still present & the awful, great hunger. Nothing settled, my music crackles & dances still.



Leaving Seattle series

November 10, 2007
Portland, Oregon

I'm going to write ceaseless for the next several hours, it's been building up in me for a long time, this hard wish, starts & starts

I'm restless for action, for extents, for I don't know what—
 I don't know how to pursue it, just know I have to do more than I have with what I am—

I have a journal to catch up—

Take care of pen the rest sorts itself out—

Art the open door.
 Always with you.

Blah fucking blah.

So what's the solid ground, first thing first. I used to know. I used to say the word Art or Music & nod & that was that. Somewhere else now, maybe, or a faith but not enough, more picture than once, what?

I don't know. I don't reject anything but that's not enough, does not guide.

I know most of my hours are scripted & maybe that's even Ok. Start with just the sense that material reality ongoes—space/time—& yet not enough, no explanations—guesses, myths, codified—

What then? Guesses & myths, codified, called culture, the pretty heads civilizations wear.

Explain flesh, explain want, explain music. Go on Explain any of it. I'm listening & not enough. That's where I get caught in the insufficiency, even the unattractiveness of most explanations (myths & guesses, codified)—not attractive, not hopeful, hardly even honest.

Good shit happens, bad shit happens. Calling good & bad on anything presents a judgment, this is a problem too.

Murder wrong by an applied standard of behavior. Even this, it can be situationally justified. What then? If not a single thing, perhaps, is perpetually true then what solid ground to work with? Call it ground at all then? What metaphor might work?

I seem to write from the questions, & an anger at the answers, a hard anger at them.

Start with music because it seems tuned to breathing, to heartbeat,

& dreams because they inexplicably happen, to everyone, every night, even animals

want, toward warmth, feeding, coupling, in humans toward an empathic understanding, a lingual or non-lingual bonding—

psychedelia simply as that link, that induced link from human to human, human to himself, human to other, & how “Other” is a false distinction

Nature contains but is itself ever changing, never fully knowable, or tellable—

none of it explains, just lights in the mind’s skies, no more—tools to work with in ground that may or may not be—

Anyway, I keep coming back to these ideas, mere stray planks on a wide foam—



Arriving Portland series

November 13, 2007
Portland, Oregon

Strangely, *Schultz & Peanuts* occupies the most of late—how twined he & his Art, how he made billions & crazy fame & renown & yet could still wake up one morning in '72, marriage over, sleeping on a couch, looking for a cereal bowl to eat breakfast—

A strange man, revealed by the author David Michaelis to be looney deep twined with his comic strip. His confessions, his demons, *Peanuts* was his 50 year account of daily living, transmuted into great humorous art.

What other path, what other choice? Art takes it all, feeds on it, til nothing left. Life, experiences, people, all become feed for inspiration, for riding the spark.

When life begins to hold back, look elsewhere, keep a little for itself, Art punishes, punishes hard. What was easy, eludes. The bottomless well now a puddle.

I've lived leaning both ways at different times, or at least toward Art heavier & less heavy.

Now Art obsesses me but I hesitate—I dawdle—I waste—

Yet I come back—it's my longest relationship—the one I have with my artistic self. Nothing else knows me as well, defines me as hard & as true.

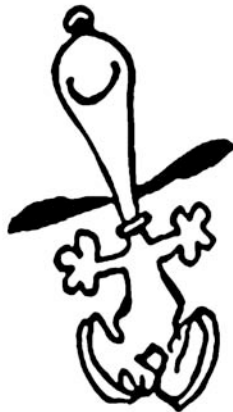
What then? Things change, & they change again. Simple.

Confidence in ability isn't it. It's faith in the need to say. Whether it matters to me when I do it, maybe it doesn't. Yet it does. I know it does. Rather, I know I want it to.

What matters is necessity & this I've found foremost in Art.

The hook in things is what matters, chase after the moving hook in things is what matters, when I find it I chase, chase relentless, & don't give a damn where it comes out for others to see.

Tell, not show? I don't know. My pen is going to flow relentless for a while tonight.



December 1, 2007
Portland, Oregon

No Country for Old Men is a fairly merciless film, flayed open, I should like it more than I do—I see its depth & craftsmanship, but I don't feel much toward it—I don't terribly care for anyone in it—it fails to matter to me—unlike other Coen Bros. films, there isn't really anyone to like in it. I would not praise it high as so many have been doing.

It shows what happens but not why—and I don't care what happens next—an evil man but no explanation—I was sitting there not caring, riveted by the visual & performance aesthetics but not caring—a great creation but—

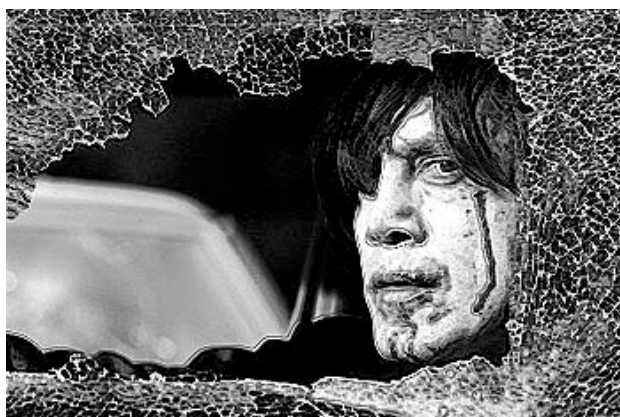
I think of *Into the Wild*, of *3:10 to Yuma*, to a lesser degree of *American Gangster* & *Across the Universe*, even the *Saw* series—oh & *Eastern Promises* too—character *matters*, motivation *matters*, history & experience *matter*, & twined vitally with these a narrative—

So all this—*No Country* is finely made, finely performed but its violence & suffering do not sum to much for me—tellingly its quasi-hero dies off-camera, & his wife also to a lesser degree—at least her last minutes are shown—

I suppose one brings ideas & prejudices to a work of Art—I want to see my heroes fall, if they do—that's a general point. Coen Bros. movies I expect to be both bluntly violent & strangely endearing. *No Country* is the first but not the second. Always well-made, even the horrible *Intolerable Cruelty*, but I expect the others. *No Country* is an ambitious disappointment.

I ask myself related questions about my fiction, its endless puzzles & tricks, why fucking bother if the characters on the pages aren't compelling?

It's my own angle & my own worry—I need characters who matter within stories that matter—I can't think otherwise on this—or simply don't wish to—



December 21, 2007
Portland, Oregon

Dreams I've wondered about them for years, what they are, what to do with them, how waking hours sink into their far, wide continent & what is familiar distorts, the least ruffling hour turns up in a new, ghoulish form. Nothing dreams might not use, feed on & remake. How they cross all demarcations the human species divides & identifies its members & its world by. Poor, rich, a child, a crone. Never had sex? Never dropped a hit of acid? Don't touch rum or stout? But you've dreamed & many times. Every soul in this loud, talky coffeehouse will dream tonight, every one, several times. Each will fall asleep into rest, into dream, blunt or surreal (or both) visual narratives, fragments, epics. Some will sweat, some will smile through. Some will see old lovers, lost parents, childhood rooms. Some will wake & forget but maybe not all.

What are they? What for? What do? Where memory & brain chemistry flash into images? More, I believe it. I really do. Yet I poke at them tentatively. I near & retreat. Not clear what matter they be, what I intend toward them, I as of yet still eschew dream herbs, & dream journals. But reckon this, I've been reading at them more of late, a beat paperback called *Creative Dreaming* by Patricia Garfield who calls for among other things to script dreams, plan a question, a scenario. Ask for help, or arrange a way help might be obtained.

My fiction has always been rife with dream ideas, images, & settings. I've settled for calling it Dreamland though I don't know if this a placeholder moniker or not. Dreamland has been pushing more obviously into my poetry. What I've been groping for is a developed relation, an approach, not to be controlled or control, collaboration I guess I'd call it. Like with Art, like with psychedelics, I want to learn, appreciate, I want to interpret & release what-all eventually results as songs, as fiction, better songs, better fiction, collaboration is the word really.

Do with Dream. Simply that. Do with Dream. Garfield talks about integrating dream-life with waking hours. There's a fiction figure I write about named Benny Big Dreams who opposes that very thing. I don't know if either is right yet how possible each will not affect the other with the continued energies of my attention?

Some feel dreams bear arcane knowledge, tape it, learn & know more than others. I don't know. Most "arcane" human knowledge doesn't add up to much. Origins in the mud or stars, consciousness from eating mushrooms or fucking Martians, destiny in the clouds, in the somewhere else. Come from the unknowable, bound for the unforeseeable. All this explained.

Since I've long believed that most of humanity feeds, breeds, works & dies, & little else, I used to think this meant just a vanguard of men & women would arrive in the far place of light, if such there was. Yet all dream, *all*, it is almost a singular activity in that respect. Especially being an act common to all yet unique. Neither is it a unique human activity. Animals dream. *Dreams cross species*. Yet it bears no widely agreed on role in many places. Meaningful, meaningless? Chemistry, psychology, occult?

A white-haired man prepares his coffee, cream, napkins, walks hunched for a table. Eye-glassed, long dark trench coat, blue jeans, nice black shoes. What will he dream tonight? He will dream. What of the crowd of pretty college children hunched laughing over a paperback? Who will wake whimpering? Who takes a pill to keep the nightmares at bay? Who writes them down, who paints them on large canvases?

I just wonder if the awkward conversations people have about dreams is like talking about swimming in the ocean from a dirt dry point.

The old man is reading today's newspaper, will it figure into his nocturnal adventures? The pretty children teach each other shadow puppets. One woman shows another a photograph album.

It's here, now, these dreams to come are incubating. *They are already present*, percolating.

Maybe within Dreamland what I'm looking for will present. Maybe not. Will I have to invent it. Could I?

How will *Led Zeppelin IV* on my iPod trace into my dreams?

"Going down now

Going down . . ."

—Led Zeppelin, "When the Levee Breaks."



Arriving Portland series

December 23, 2007
mid-afternoon
On board Alaska Airlines
flight 508, Portland, Oregon-
to-Denver, Colorado

What strive or strivings of Scriptor Press & my pen in 2008 & beyond? I've asked this question before, years ending & other times too, & certainly would not have accomplished what has been done so far if not some vows toward work been met.

Scriptor Press & my writing as a whole began long & far from where I live now, began in a suburban home in the northeast U.S. a third of a century ago. I was a boy, grew up lonely & a little poor, responded by stretching my world through books, & by pushing into my imagination. In some ways I am still now what I was then. What I do with my pen & press is to try to conjure or know beauty & meaning as I see it, spread my news & words of it widely. Where there is less, there should be more. Where there is wealth, there should be better sharing.

Scriptor Press is my vehicle for effecting changing in the world, its engine sources in my pen & words, its hope that I successfully collaborate with others, its ambition to do so more & more.

In moving this year back to Portland, I was making a deliberate decision about where to base my operation & ground my perspective. The Pacific Northwest is populated by all manner of seers & nuts living close to awesomely beautiful nature. There is in this region at least a tolerance to difference of view & vision, & a pervasive leaning toward living well with the land & its beings. Not every person you meet, & not perfect in how plans play out, but always in the arena of pushing for progress.

These past several months my wife & assistant editor Kassi & I have been settling in, walking around, making gestures here & there. Rooting solid in a new place takes time, days pass uncertain at times but efforts do come.

I've mulled what ways an independent small press can determine & accomplish its ends. Scriptor Press is multi-media in breadth, publishing a periodical & several series of books, hosting a website & producing an Internet radio program. Additionally, we attend each year the Burning Man Arts Festival in Black Rock City, Nevada, & the Portland Zine Symposium in downtown Portland.

On the pragmatic level I see four distinct nodes of dissemination: 1) Cyberspace; 2) Event; 3) Storefront; & 4) Post/E-mail. Cyberspace involves building a website & expanding its content & reach over time. *The ElectroLounge* is nearing 9 years online & hosts many freely distributed Scriptor Press projects. Additionally, my weekly radio show, "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution," promotes the many voices & values Scriptor Press endorses. Events such as Burning Man & the PDX Zinefest let us freely distribute our projects & meet others who want to find ways & encouragement to cohere & express their ideas. Storefront is one we've done little with but the fertile ground of Portland contains bookstores & coffeehouses a-plenty to work with. Post/e-mail we've done some with through mailing lists but, again, not enough compared to the potential there.

Eagerness to do more coincides with a year pending of tumultuous change. The 2008 U.S. elections will have a profound part in what the world will look like hereon. There is awesome potential to heal the planet of its human-made ills, to undo the horrific damage done this decade by the corporate & elected elite. Human ingenuity & technological innovation could bring traditionally distant promises of paradise wonderfully closer. We *can*

help the sick & the poor, we *can* right our balance within nature, we *can* alter & mend human institutions toward a goal of bringing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Beloved Community" into wider being. These are not unreachable goals. Potential in a single soul & its race alike lies in whether hope or despair dominate heart & dreams, & the work of days.

Hope & work grounded in discipline, tolerance, & flexibility are the guiding ideas fueling Scriptor Press's drive into & through 2008 & beyond. There will be stumbles, & sometimes a fall, but there will be a dusting off & a trudging on. Running through my head as constant as breathing in my lungs is the thought to bring more resources together, people, their energy, their projects, tools, & gifts. I have been both blessed & lucky in my life, though like anyone else I have felt & acted upon my gratitude better & worse. I still need many private hours to write many things I've no intention of publishing, I still view my being & reality as uncertainly as any other. Scriptor Press's fortunes & power wax or wane with my various doings.

This all said, here are a few specific goals of Scriptor Press in 2008:

1. **Expand the scope & reach of current projects online, at events, by mail, & in storefronts.**
2. **Synthesize & clarify Scriptor Press's projects, not like parts in a single machine but like members of an effective tribe.**
3. **Support the efforts of others in their work & in their work's dissemination, teach, aid, broadcast widely as possible.**
4. **Participate frequently & visible in the progressive movement's efforts to unseat the corporate cabal directing American governance & causing ruinous results all over the world.**
5. **Better discipline, more learning, better work. What impresses others in a press's mode of operation is a high adherence to quality & a deeply lived set of values & beliefs.**
6. **Never lose sight of what good & strange in the world resides outside the pervue of press, of dissemination. There is much none can explain, though many would try. Embedding a press's operations in wider mysteries it cannot know fully or tell very well of keeps it a humble project compared to the many realities, universes, & dimensions possible.**

Perhaps, at the end of 2008 there will be a follow-up to these remarks & vows. Perhaps sooner. For now, the words are writ, this ink reflects the best of what's in my heart, & I feel hope for making this effort. Let its fruit be ripe & many, & shared as widely as possible.



*Scriptor Press
Portland, Oregon*



Judith Hooper

Interview with John Lilly

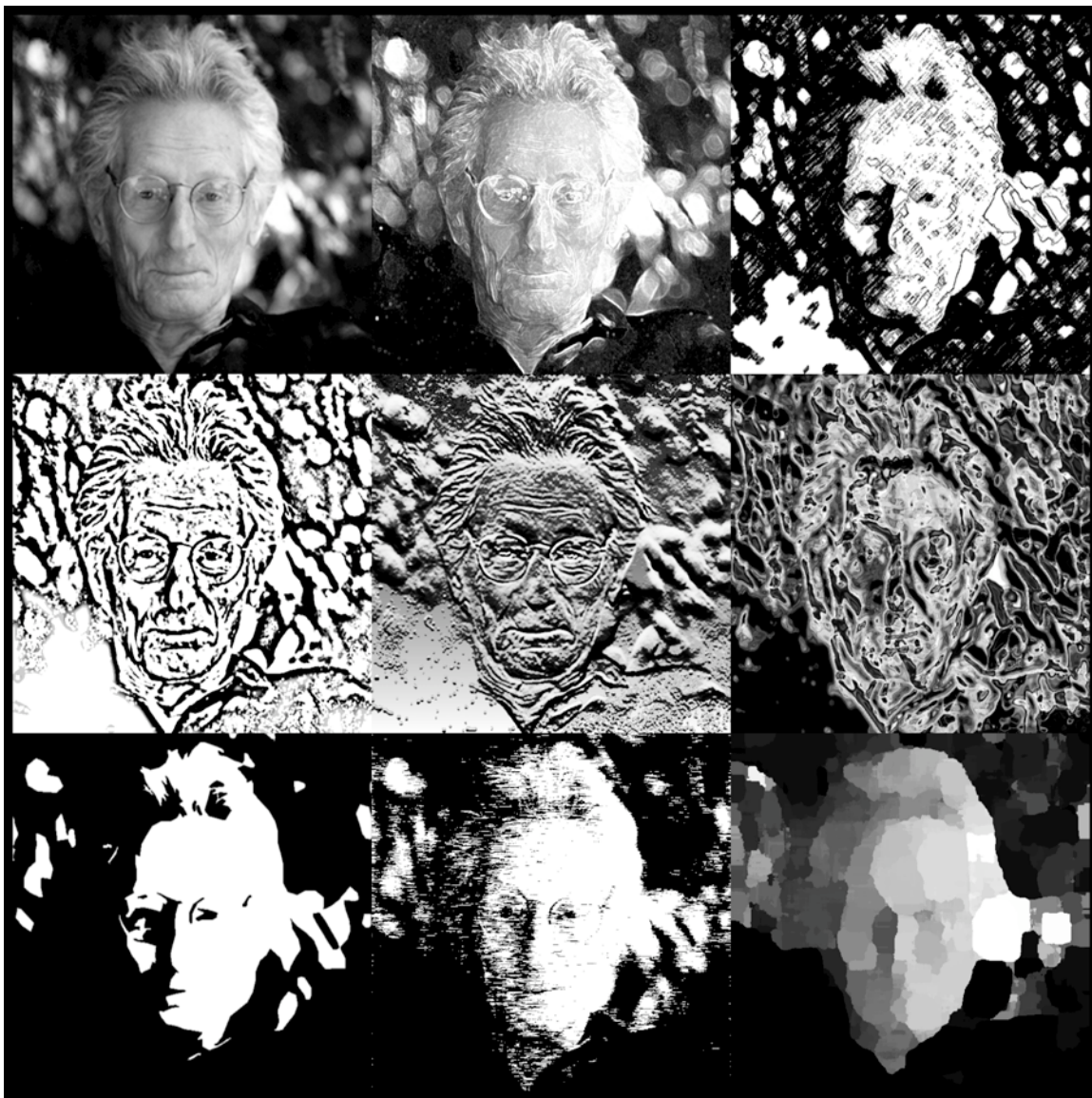
Omni Magazine, January 1983

Above the ranch-style dream houses and seafood restaurants along the Pacific Coast Highway the rugged, bleached Malibu canyons, twisting roads, dusty scrub oaks, and desert sagebrush speak a supernal language. It is a landscape of the spirit more than of the body, and Dr. John C. Lilly, dolphin magus and scientist-turned-seeker, seems at home here—where the spectacular surf down at Zuma Beach is a mere rim of white foam on the edge of the world. If life imitates art, Dr. Lilly should live on just such a mountaintop.

It hadn't been easy to find him. When I asked scientist acquaintances about Lilly's whereabouts, most of them said something like, "Do you mean, what dimension?" Someone thought he worked with dolphins at Marine World, in Redwood City, just south of San Francisco, and, it turns out, he does. But when I phoned there, I talked to a succession of secretaries who had never heard of the remarkable Dr. Lilly. I finally left a message with "Charlie," a gate guard who told me that he sometimes "sees him go in and out." No luck. When at last I called his house in Malibu, Lilly answered the telephone himself and gave me road directions that were accurate to the tenth of a mile.

Lilly's autobiography, *The Scientist* (1978), begins with the creation of the universe out of cosmic dust, but his own human chronicle starts in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1915. A scholarship whiz kid at the California Institute of Technology, Lilly graduated with a degree in biology and physics in 1938 and went on to earn his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Though he became a qualified psychoanalyst, his first love was brain "hardware." His mastery of neurophysiology, neuroanatomy, biophysics, electronics, and computer theory gave him something of the technical ingenuity of the genie in *The Arabian Nights*. From 1953 to 1958 he held two posts—one at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and one at the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness—both part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in Bethesda, Maryland. In his early years at the NIH he invented a technique that allowed scientists for the first time to take brainwave recordings from the cortex of unanesthetized animals. He also mapped the brain's pleasure and pain systems by direct electrical stimulation of its core regions. And in 1954, tackling the classic puzzle of what would happen to the brain if it were deprived of all external stimulation, he built the world's first isolation tank.

Floating in his dark, silent, saltwater void—the original version of which required that he wear a skindiver's mask—Lilly discovered that sensory deprivation did not put the brain to sleep, as many scientists had supposed. Furthermore, tanking led him far afield from the doctrine that the mind is fully contained within the physical brain. The tank, he declared, was a "black hole in psychophysical space, a psychological freefall," which could induce unusual sensations: reverie states, waking dreams, even a kind of out-of-the-body travel. (Today, of course, isolation tanks are so much a part of the culture that even straitlaced businessmen routinely spend their lunch hours—and upwards of \$20—relaxing in health-spa tranquility tanks based on Lilly's original design.



More and more enamored of the deep, womblike peace he experienced in the tank, Lilly began to wonder what it would be like to be buoyant all the time. Whales, dolphins, and porpoises sprang to mind, and the rest, of course, is history. By 1961, Lilly had resigned from the NIH to found and direct the Communications Research Institute, in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Miami, Florida, for the purpose of studying these big-brained, sea-dwelling mammals. Convinced that dolphins are not only smarter but more “humane” than *homo sapiens* and that they communicate in a sophisticated sonar language popularized, rather inaccurately, by the baby-talking dolphins of the film *Day of the Dolphin*—Lilly began a lifelong quest to “talk” to the Cetacea. Today he uses a “two-faced” computer system called JANUS—named after the two-faced Roman god—to work out a human/dolphin language.

While Lilly was experimenting with otherworldly states in the isolation tank, the halcyon days of hallucinogenic research were under way at the NIMH. (LSD was not to become a controlled and, therefore, sticky substance until 1966.) Lilly, however, did not try LSD until the early 1960s. Once he did, it became his high mass. Mixing LSD and isolation tanking for the first time in 1964, he entered what he described as “profound altered states”—transiting interstellar realms, conversing with supernatural beings, giving birth to himself, and, like Pascal, exploring infinities macroscopic and microscopic. “I traveled among cells. watched their functioning . . . and realized that within myself was a grand assemblage of living organisms, all of which added up to me,” he would write of his illuminations in *The Center of the Cyclone* (1972). “I traveled through my brain, watching the neurons and their activities . . . I moved into smaller and smaller dimensions, down to the quantum levels, and watched the play of the atoms in their own vast universes, their wide empty spaces, and the fantastic forces involved in each of the distant nuclei with their orbital clouds of force field electrons . . . It was really frightening to see the tunneling effects and the other phenomena of the quantal level taking place.”

By all accounts, Lilly has probably taken more psychedelic substances—notably LSD and “vitamin K,” the superhallucinogen he prefers not to identify—than anyone else in the consciousness business. Since the lords and overseers of establishment science frown on using one’s own brain and nervous system as an experimental laboratory, Lilly today reports his findings in popular books instead of in neurophysiology papers. He makes the scene at such New Age watering holes as Esalen, in California, and Oscar Ichazo’s Arica training place, in Chile. He hasn’t received a government grant since 1968. When asked about him, mainstream scientists tend to shake their heads sadly, as if recalling someone recently deceased.

“The trouble with Lilly is that he is in love with death,” says one neuroscientist friend of his. “But, God, is he brilliant!” Yes, he is brilliant, and, yes, he does seem to have flirted quite flagrantly with death. Though LSD- or K-related accidents have almost killed him on at least three occasions, Lilly still keeps going back to the void, once tripping on K, he tells me for 100 solid days and nights. It is also true that he has always returned to Earth, however constraining its boundaries, and that his wife, Toni, has had a good deal to do with that.

The moment I arrive at his house, having driven my rental car over zigzagging mountain roads, Lilly announces, “We have one rule in this house. No one can take drugs of any kind and drive back down that road.” Five minutes later he seems to be offering me acid and K—or did I hallucinate that? Is he putting me on? What kind of game is he playing with the anonymous reporter who has come to call?

He tapes me with a matchbook-sized Japanese tape recorder while I tape him: The phone rings and Lilly answers it, his face as immobile as the wooden Indian that guards his

entryway. “Who are you?” he demands. His side of the conversation is curt. “It was someone asking about the solid-state entities,” he tells me. As our interview proceeds, I watch various expressions play across his patrician, chiseled-granite face—unexpected sweetness whenever he speaks of Toni, or of dolphins. (When talking about a dolphin, Lilly always uses the pronoun he, never it.) Sometimes his language is full-bodied, and poetic; sometimes it is a private blend of computerspeak and Esalenese, full of phrases like “Earth Coincidence Control Offices,” “metaprogrammings,” and “belief-system interlocks.” My own questions echo in my head, and Lilly seems bored, on the verge of walking off abruptly into a zero-g universe of his own. Possibly to get rid of me for a while, he escorts me to his samadhi isolation tank.

In this warm, saline sea of isolation, where such luminaries as Nobel physicist Richard Feynman, anthropologist Gregory Bateson, psychologist Charles Tart, and est czar Werner Erhard have floated and had visions, I try to sort it all out. My visions are disconnected, rudimentary: I am a swamp plant trailing its leaves on the water; a fetus; a dolphin; a whirring brain in an inert shell. An hour and a half later (one loses track of time) I emerge and try to continue the interview. The problem is, in my state of tranquillity, I have lost interest in asking reporterlike questions, and, besides, I feel Lilly retreating more and more into some remote, glacial space behind his eyes. From another room a manic laugh track from what sounds like an old *I Love Lucy* show floats out to us. Some time later Toni Lilly suddenly walks in, smiling and carrying bags of groceries. Her husband jumps up to help her unload the car, and I take my cue to depart back down the mountain.

Only later, at home in the Los Angeles lowlands, do I notice that I am altered—that for 24 hours after isolation-tanking, reality looks and feels quite different. Four weeks later I telephone Lilly, and we talk again. The following interview is the result of our afternoon together in his Malibu home and of that subsequent telephone conversation.

OMNI: You’re probably best known as “Dr. John Lilly, the dolphin man.” What is the aim of your current dolphin research?

Lilly: At Marine World, we’re working with computers to develop a human/dolphin code, analogous to the Morse code used in telegraphy. The project is called JANUS—for Joint Analog Numerical Understanding System. Like the Roman god Janus, it has two “faces”—a dolphin side and a human side.

A human/dolphin language must contend with the fact that dolphins communicate at frequencies ten times above the human range. While our speech falls between three hundred and three thousand hertz, or cycles per second, dolphins talk to one another underwater at frequencies from three thousand to thirty thousand hertz. If you go into a pool with a dolphin and he starts whistling, you’ll hear what sounds like very high-pitched squeaks. So the problem is to bring their frequency down into our sound window and ours up into theirs.

We’re using a computer system to transmit sounds underwater to the dolphins. A computer is electrical energy oscillating at particular frequencies, which can vary, and we use a transducer to convert the electrical waveforms into acoustical energy. You could translate the waveforms into any kind of sound you like: human speech, dolphin-like clicks, whatever.

OMNI: Do you type something out on the computer keyboard and have it transmitted to the dolphins as sound in their frequency range? And do they communicate back to the computer?

Lilly: Yes, but we actually use two computers. An Apple II transmits sounds to the dolphins, via a transducer, from a keyboard operated by humans. Then there is another

computer, made by Digital Equipment Corporation, that listens to the dolphins. A hydrophone, or underwater microphone, picks up any sounds the dolphins make, feeds them into a frequency analyzer, a sonic spectrum analyzer, and then into the computer. So the computer has an ear and a voice, and the dolphin has an ear and a voice. The system also displays visual information to the dolphins.

On the human side it's rather ponderous, because we have to punch keys and see letters on a screen. People have tried to make dolphins punch keys, but I don't think dolphins should have to punch keys. They don't have these little fingers that we have. So we'd prefer to develop a sonic code as the basis of a dolphin computer language. If a group of dolphins can work with a computer that feeds back to them what they just said—names of objects and so forth—and if we can be the intercessors between them and the computer, I think we can eventually communicate. [See "Talking Computer for Dolphins," *Continuum*, August 1982.]

OMNI: How long will it take to break through the interspecies communication barrier?

Lilly: About five years. I think it may take about a year for the dolphins to learn the code, and then, in about five years we'll have a human/dolphin dictionary. However, we need some very expensive equipment to deal with dolphins' underwater sonar. Since dolphins "see" with sound in three dimensions—in stereo—you have to make your words "stereophonic words."

OMNI: You've said that dolphins also use "sonar beams" to look at the internal state of one another's body, or that of a human being, and that they can even gauge another's emotional state that way. How does that work?

Lilly: They have a very high-frequency sonar that they can use to inspect something and look at its internal structure. Say you're immersed in water and a sound wave hits your body. If there's any gas in your body, it reflects back an incredible amount of sound. To the dolphin it would appear as a bright spot in the acoustic picture.

OMNI: Can we ever really tune in to the dolphin's "stereophonic" world view, or is it perhaps too alien to ours?

Lilly: I want to. I just did a very primitive experiment—a Saturday afternoon-type experiment—at Marine World. I was floating in an isolation tank and had an underwater loudspeaker close to my head and an air microphone just above me. Both were connected through an amplifier to the dolphin tank so that they could hear me and I could hear them. I started playing with sound—whistling and clicking and making other noises that dolphins like. Suddenly I felt as if a lightning bolt had hit me on the head. We have all this on tape, and it's just incredible. It was a dolphin whistle that went sssshhheeeeeooooo in a falling frequency from about nine thousand to three thousand hertz in my hearing range. It started at the top of my head, expanding as the frequency dropped, and showing me the inside of my skull, and went right down through my body. The dolphin gave me a three-dimensional feeling of the inside of my skull, describing my body by a single sound!

I want to know what the dolphin experiences. I want to go back and repeat the experiment in stereo, instead of with a single loudspeaker. Since I'm not equipped like a dolphin, I've got to use an isolation tank, electronics, and all this nonsense to pretend I'm a dolphin.

OMNI: Human language isn't merely descriptive; it has also evolved abstractions—units symbolizing things that aren't physically real, that have no material composition. You've written that dolphins probably have "ancient vocal histories that their young must learn." Do you believe their language is a symbolic system?

Lilly: Sure. If it weren't, they wouldn't exist. They have to know different kinds of fish and coral, the distinction between edible and inedible—that sort of thing. I suggest you don a dolphin suit and join them.

OMNI: You've pointed out that the bottle-nosed dolphin's brain is forty percent larger than ours, and the orca [killer whale] has a brain four times larger. These big-brained dolphins and whales also have a larger association cortex, uncommitted to basic sensorimotor processing and, therefore, available for thinking. If cetaceans are smarter than we, why do we humans assume we're the crown of creation?

Lilly: Because we can't talk to anyone else. The highest intelligence on the planet probably exists in a sperm whale who has a ten-thousand-gram brain, six times larger than ours. I'm convinced that intelligence is a function of absolute brain size. Some years ago I solved the brain weight/body weight problem, demonstrating that a large brain cannot exist in a small body: it needs a massive body to protect it. A brain is very fragile, and if it is rotated very fast—by a blow to the jaw, for instance—it tears loose from its moorings and kills itself by intracranial bleeding. So, too, as a brain gets larger, the head surrounding it, and its moment of inertia, must increase to prevent dangerous rotation. Maybe the human brain can evolve further if we get control of our genetic code. But in what direction?

OMNI: What has your intense acquaintance with cetaceans taught you about their character? What is their world like?

Lilly: It's mostly sonic, as I've said, since they live in the water twenty-four hours a day and can't see at night. They have no sense of smell, but a very discriminating taste sense. And, of course, they're buoyant, as you are in an isolation tank. One day while I was floating in the tank at NIMH, I thought, "Gee, wouldn't it be great to do this twenty-four hours a day!" When I mentioned it to a friend, he said, "Well, try the dolphins." So that's how I started to work with dolphins.

Having voluntary respiration, dolphins are interdependent in ways in which we aren't; they have a group mind. If a dolphin passes out for any reason, his friends must wake him up. Otherwise he'll drown. So every dolphin is aware of where every other dolphin is, just in case he's needed. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is one of their rules, and, unlike us, they follow it twenty-four hours a day. They're also more spiritual, since they have more time to meditate. Try the isolation tank and you'll see what it's like.

OMNI: Tell me the circumstances that led you to invent the first isolation tank.

Lilly: There was a problem in neurophysiology at the time: Is brain activity self-contained or not? One school of thought said the brain needed external stimulation or it would go to sleep—become unconscious—while the other school said, "No, there are automatic oscillators in the brain that keep it awake." So I decided to try a sensory-isolation experiment, building a tank to reduce external stimuli—auditory, visual, tactile, temperature—almost to nil. The tank is lightproof and soundproof. The water in the tank is kept at ninety-three to ninety-four degrees. So you can't tell where the water ends and your body begins, and it's neither hot nor cold. If the water were exactly body temperature, it couldn't absorb your body's heat loss, your body temperature would rise above one hundred six degrees, and you might die.

I discovered that the oscillator school of thought was right, that the brain does not go unconscious in the absence of sensory input. I'd sleep in the tank if I hadn't had any sleep for a couple of nights, but more interesting things happen if you're awake. You can have waking dreams, study your dreams, and, with the help of LSD-25 or a chemical agent I call vitamin K, you can experience alternate realities. You're safe in the tank because you're not walking around and falling down, or mutating your perception of external "reality."

OMNI: At the time you invented the tank weren't you doing brain research at the National Institute of Mental Health?

Lilly: Yes. I invented a technique called an electrocorticograph, or ECG, for implanting multiple electrode arrays onto the surface of the brain itself without injuring brain tissue as much as previous methods did. It was the first method for taking electrical recordings from the brains of unanesthetized animals—or even of humans. On a kind of television monitor, you could watch the brain waves moving across the cerebral cortex in two dimensions. Basically, you pound a short length of hypodermic needle tubing through the scalp, adjusting it to the depth of the bone so that the scalp closes over it. Then you can come back and put electrodes down through that little channel.

OMNI: Was this the same technique you used to map the brain's pain and pleasure systems with direct electrical stimulation?

Lilly: No, that requires putting electrodes below the cortex, into the brain's deep motivational systems. The electrodes were the same; we just pushed them in deeper. At McGill University in Montreal, James Olds and Peter Milner had discovered the positive-reinforcing systems in rats' brains. [In these famous studies, conducted in the early Fifties, rats learned to self-stimulate by activating electrodes in their brains' pleasure centers.] And H. E. Rosvold, of Yale University, had uncovered the negative reinforcing systems in cats. I was the man who mapped both sides, positive and negative, and I went to a higher animal, the macaque monkey.

When I did the experiments again in the dolphin, I found he could inhibit his angry, aggressive responses when I stimulated the negative systems. That was fascinating: With his large, eighteen-hundred-gram brain, he had enough cerebral cortex to veto messages from the lower centers. Men can do that, too, as scientists such as [Tulane University medical researcher] Robert Heath have shown. Once, when Heath was stimulating a patient's negative system, the patient said, "You stimulate that point again and I'll pull the electrodes out."

OMNI: Then would you say intelligence is a function of inhibition?

Lilly: Yes. You need a cerebral cortex of a critical size, with fine fiber connections running in both directions to the lower systems. That's where the middle self ("I-me") lives, up in that cortex—not in the lower centers. The lower centers (our lower self) prod us from below, as it were, with love or hate or fear. I think that the superself controls from somewhere "above the brain," in the spiritual domains.

OMNI: What structures are involved in the brain's pain and pleasure pathways?

Lilly: Well, the preoptic nucleus in the anterior hypothalamus, at the base of the brain, is very negative. It's our main survival nucleus: If the temperature is too hot or too cold, this nucleus freaks out the rest of the brain. If there's too much sodium in the blood, it freaks out the brain. It's an area for total fear. Then, moving downward toward the spinal cord, you hit a part of the hypothalamus that stimulates extreme pain all over the body. If you move sideways in either direction in that area of the brain, however, stimulation becomes incredibly positive. Around the preoptic nucleus, you run into the sexual system, which, in males, controls erection, orgasm, and ejaculation—each in a separate place—while farther back, in the mesencephalon, the three are integrated and fired off in sequence.

The brain has other pleasure systems, too—systems that stimulate nonsexual pleasure all over the body and systems that set off emotional pleasure. That is a kind of continuous pleasure that doesn't peak—a satori of mind. Satori and samadhi [terms for enlightened-bliss states in Zen Buddhism and Hinduism, respectively] and the Christian "states of grace" seem to involve a constant influx of pleasure and no orgasmic climax—like

tantric sex. Spiritual states use these brain systems in their service. Many philosophers, including Patanjali, the second-century B.C. author of the *Yoga Sutras*, have said that jnana yoga—the yoga of the mind—is the highest form of yoga. In this self-transcendence one can experience bliss while performing God’s work; only recently have I achieved this for days at a time.

OMNI: In your book *The Scientist* you wrote, “If we can each experience at least the lower levels of satori, there is hope that we won’t blow up the planet or otherwise eliminate life as we know it.” Are altered states necessary to our survival?

Lilly: Yes, the experience of higher states of consciousness, or alternate realities—I don’t like the term altered states—is the only way to escape our brains’ destructive programming, fed to us as children by a disgruntled karmic history. Newborns are connected to the divine; war is the result of our programmed disconnection from divine sources.

I am writing a book about alternate realities called *From Here to Alternity: A Manual on Ways of Amusing God*. On vitamin K, I have experienced states in which I can contact the creators of the universe, as well as the local creative controllers—the Earth Coincidence Control Office, or ECCO. They’re the guys who run the earth and who program us, though we’re not aware of it. I asked them, “What’s your major program?” They answered, “To make you guys evolve to the next levels, to teach you, to kick you in the pants when necessary.”

Because our consensus reality programs us in certain destructive directions, we must experience other realities in order to know we have choices. That’s what I call Alternity. On K, I can look across the border into other realities. I can open my eyes in this reality and dimly see the alternate reality, then close my eyes, and the alternate reality picks up. On K you can tune your internal eyes. They are not what is called the “third eye,” which is centrally located, but are stereo, like the merging of our two eyes’ images. Perhaps someday, if we learn about the type of radiation coming through those eyes, we can simulate the experience with a hallucinatory movie camera—an alternate-reality camera.

OMNI: What is so special about vitamin K?

Lilly: It’s a lot more fun than LSD or any of the other agents, because it induces a short trip and you can train yourself to the state. Pretty soon you can take ten times as much and still walk around and talk to people coherently, in spite of the fact that reality is vibrating. I can run my computer, ski, or do just about anything on K. I’ve been on it as much as a hundred days straight. You don’t really sleep, you don’t really dream, because you don’t need to. And on K, I can experience the quantum reality: I can see [eminent University of Texas physicist] John Wheeler’s hyperspace from within.

OMNI: Can you explain what you mean by experiencing hyperspace from within?

Lilly: Wheeler’s hyperspace also is known as a “nonlocal reality.” Each of a pair of photons coming from an atom knows immediately what the other is doing, no matter how far away from each other they are. You can assume the existence of tachyons—faster-than-light particles, carrying messages—but I prefer Bell’s theorem’s solution to the Einstein-Podolski-Rosen experiment [which illustrated a seemingly impossible connectedness between particles in two different places]. According to [John] Bell’s theorem, hyperspace would be a region of hidden variables in which all realities are represented at a single point and in which there is no need for messages to travel. The “hyperspace” with which I’ve been working is one in which I can jump from one universe to another—from this reality to an alternate reality—while maintaining human structure, size, concepts, and memories. My center of consciousness is here, and I can know immediately what’s going on anywhere in the universe. It’s a domain I now call Alternity, where all choices are possible.

OMNI: What first inspired you to use psychotropic drugs?

Lilly: I never use the word drug, because it leads into a legalistic morass. The Food and Drug Administration has been putting out bulletins lately about K, which is now listed as a possible “abused” drug. Because abuse means literally “away from use,” I prefer the term hyperuse, or “too much use.” So I don’t want to call it by its chemical name, and I think of it as vitamin K anyway, because it gives me spiritual energy. I’ve never proselytized, never advocated wholesale use of psychedelics. They are not for everyone. When Timothy Leary said, “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” only a self-selecting group ever tried LSD. I did not agree with him; my use was carefully controlled investigation, not “recreational use.”

There were a lot of “LSD pushers” around our LSD research at the NIMH when I was there in the Fifties, but I didn’t take LSD then. After about ten years in the tank I decided there was something new to be learned. So I came out here to California, where a lady I knew who had access to pure Sandoz LSD-25 gave me the LSD for my first two trips. On my first trip I went through all the usual stuff: seeing my face change in the mirror, tripping out to music. During the first two movements of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, I was kneeling in heaven, worshiping God and His angels, just as I had in church when I was seven years old. On that trip I did every thing I’d read in the psychedelic literature so as to save time and get out of the literature the next time. During my third trip, in the isolation tank in St. Thomas in 1964, I left my body and went into infinite distances—dimensions that are inhuman.

OMNI: The Ken Russell/Paddy Chayefsky film *Altered States* closely resembles your life. What did you think of it?

Lilly: I think they did a good job. The hallucination scenes are much better than anything ever produced before. I understand that some of the crew, the actors, and the producers were trained on K. The tank scenes were fine—except that in reality there are no vertical tanks, only horizontal ones—and the film implied that use of the tank itself would cause those out-of-the-body trips, which it doesn’t.

The scene in which the scientist becomes cosmic energy and his wife grabs him and brings him back to human form is straight out of my *Dyadic Cyclone* [1976]. Toni did that for me. As for the scientist’s regression into an apelike being, the late Dr. Craig Enright, who started me on K while taking a trip with me here by the isolation tank, suddenly “became” a chimp, jumping up and down and hollering for twenty-five minutes. Watching him, I was frightened. I asked him later, “Where the hell were you?” He said, “I became a prehomimid, and I was in a tree. A leopard was trying to get me. So I was trying to scare him away.” I said,

OMNI: Can substances like K take one to lower, as well as to higher, states? Could one get stuck in a lower state, and is that a possible explanation for psychosis?

Lilly: You can get into lower states—rock consciousness, solid-state consciousness, whatever. If people do get stuck there, we would never hear from them, would we? As for so-called psychosis, it’s just an insistence on staying in altered states, in spite of everyone else. Psychotics hang around and play games with everyone around them; it can be rather cruel. Anyone who has worked with them knows there’s a wise and healthy essence back there, and what you have to do is contact it. Of course everyone’s different. Some schizophrenics feel pain; others pretend pain so that they’ll be taken care of.

OMNI: Did Chayefsky interview you for either the book or the screenplay version of the film *Altered States*?

Lilly: No. The manuscript of *The Scientist* was in the hands of Bantam, the publishers. The head of Bantam called and said, “Paddy Chayefsky would like to read your manuscript.

Will you give him your permission?" I said, "Only if he calls me and asks permission." He didn't call. But he probably read the manuscript.

OMNI: UCLA psychologist and drug authority Ronald Siegel maintains that the chemical you call K can simulate the near-death experience, proving that the near-death experience is hallucination rather than a foretaste of things on the "other side." What is your view?

Lilly: Ron and I totally disagree, though I like him. He is theorizing on the side of the law. With his belief system—that these experiences are all wastebasket stuff—he doesn't know alternate realities.

My experiences have convinced me that Eastern yoga philosophy is right: that there is a purusha or atman [soul] for each person—one for the planet, one for the galaxy, and so on. As mathematician/philosopher Franklin Merrell-Wolff says in his book *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, consciousness was first—before the void even. When consciousness got bored and turned in upon itself, becoming conscious of itself, creation began. He/she/it created time, space, energy, matter, male, female—the whole tableau. It all got so complicated that sneaky things may go on beyond its ken.

If you get into these spaces at all, you must forget about them when you come back. You must forget you're omnipotent and omniscient and take the game seriously so you'll engage in sex, have children, and participate in the whole human scenario. When you come back from a deep LSD trip or a K trip—or coma or psychosis—there's always this extraterrestrial feeling. You have to read the directions in the glove compartment so you can run the human vehicle once more. After I first took acid in the tank and traveled to distant dimensions, I cried when I came back and found myself trapped in a body. I didn't even know whose body it was at first. It was the sadness of reentry. I felt squashed.

OMNI: Some of your critics have made much of the fact that intense experimentation with LSD and K has brought you to the brink of death at least three times. While giving yourself an antibiotic injection during your early days of LSD experimentation, you once used a hypodermic containing detergent foam residue, which sent you into a coma. Then, during a period of prolonged K use, you nearly drowned, and later you seriously injured yourself in a bicycle accident. Were these accidents quasi-suicides—collisions with your brain's "self-destruct programs"?

Lilly: The whole issue of suicide is a very complex program. I've never tried to commit suicide, though I've been close to death. The near-death accidents resulted from taking something and acting in a certain way so that I ended up in great danger, and so I've hypothesized that the brain contains lethal programs—self-destruct programs—below the level of awareness, which LSD or K can release or strengthen. My accidents were near-death learning experiences. There's nothing like them. They train you faster than anything I know.

The year leading up to my bicycle accident in 1974, I spent in saton, or a state of grace. I was having a ball, mostly living in alternate realities and sometimes falling flat on my face. In *The Autobiography of Ramakrishna* [1836-1886, a famous Indian saint], there's a story about Ramakrishna getting ready to board a river steamer. Two of his disciples began to fight, and so Ramakrishna went into samadhi. Since he was out of his body, his disciples had to stop fighting and carry him aboard. Well, that was the sort of state I was in, and Toni was the disciple who had to "carry me around."

OMNI: In your reflections in *The Dyadic Cyclone*, you seem to consider your accident as a way of paying for that year of bliss.

Lilly: It terminated that year. In our workshops we have a saying: "If you pass the cosmic speed limit, the cosmic cops will bust you." I got "busted." I had taken forty-two

milligrams of PCP [angel dust]. I'd been out there too long and hadn't paid enough attention to my planetside trip; so the Earth Coincidence Control Office called me back by throwing a bike accident at me while I was on PCP. I appreciate what the Control Office did. They are not cruel; they're in a state of high indifference.

While my body was in the hospital and in a coma for five days and nights, I was in alternate universes, where the guides instructed me about various planetary catastrophes. I can't make up my mind whether that was an experience of genuine realities or just a projection of the damage to my body. In any case, I begged the guides to let me go back. I had to say, "I want to go back to Toni." At one point I clung to Toni for six solid hours so I could stay with her. It was very frightening. The guides told me, "You can stay here, in which case your body dies, or you can go back." I chose to go back to Toni, as I have chosen to go back every time.

OMNI: Toni has obviously been a crucial counterpoint to what you once described as the "stainless-steel computer" part of yourself. In your recent books you've stressed the importance of what you call the "male-female dyad." Will you please explain this idea.

Lilly: That's the way the universe is constructed. Do you know about the Eleventh Commandment? It says, "Thou shalt not bore God, or He will destroy your universe." The first step in not boring God is to set up two opposing intellects, male and female, so that neither can tell what the other is thinking. If you totally fused with your mate, it might be a very dull trip.

I love female intelligences. Every single cell in your body has two x chromosomes. Every cell in my body has one x chromosome and a crippled x chromosome, an x chromosome with an arm missing, called a y chromosome. You women are so well balanced with your two x's. You can be grounded, and do the gardening, and take care of the kids and give them nurture, but we males have got to go out and explore the universe, banging our heads together and shooting one another.

OMNI: Was it really necessary for you to have the near-death experiences you've recounted?

Lilly: It was for me. It was necessary to frighten the hell out of me, but many other people are just born right and don't have to struggle as I did. I had a Catholic background, a traumatic childhood—the whole business.

OMNI: What was it about a Catholic background that you had to "unlearn"?

Lilly: The whole construct. I'd been taught by Irish Jesuits, who are very clever. They made up multiple layers of rationality for the whole Catholic structure. The nice thing about Catholicism, however, is that it teaches you what to believe. So when you throw it over, you know exactly what you're throwing over. You can say, "I don't believe in the Father Almighty," and continue right through the Apostles' Creed, the Confiteor, and the rest of it, tossing out one tenet at a time.

I believe in God, but not in the "Catholic God," who is vengeful. There's the whole business about guilt, "impure thoughts," going to hell if you don't do what the church commands. One way this was solved for me, intellectually if not emotionally, was by reading the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Christ comes back to Earth. The Grand Inquisitor tells him, "When we saw those miracles in the street, we knew you were back. But this time we're not giving you any publicity. We're keeping you in this cell. We know how to run these people now." That just knocked the church right out of me, and by the time I was finished with CalTech, medical school, and psychoanalysis, that belief system was pretty well cleaned out of me.

OMNI: What about psychoanalysis as religion? Both use the confessional, an elaborate rational system for structuring the irrational, transference, and so on.

Lilly: Well, I didn't get into the religious aspects, as I was fortunate in having an analyst, Robert Waelder, who was free of the dogma. He had been trained by Anna Freud in Vienna, had a Ph.D. in physics, and was an analyst's analyst. I took psychoanalytic training under him for eight years, and he would go anywhere with me. Right off, practically in our first session, I told him I wanted to get a divorce [from his first of three wives] but that I thought I couldn't if I was in analysis. "Where did you learn that?" he asked. I said, "In the Freudian literature." He said, "Dr. Lilly, we are not here to analyze Freud, psychoanalytic literature, or other people's rules for your behavior. We are here to analyze you."

OMNI: How is it that, trained for eight years in psychoanalysis, you decided to devote yourself to brain hardware instead?

Lilly: I'd already had enough neurophysiological training to know there were a lot of mysteries in the brain. As Waelder said, psychoanalytic theory accounts for about one tenth of one percent of what goes on in psychoanalysis. I had to go further than that to find something more satisfying, and I found it in the concept of metaprogramming the human biocomputer.

A human being is a biorobot with a biocomputer in it, the brain. But we are not that brain, and we are not that body. A soul essence inhabits us, and, under acid, under K, under anesthesia, you'll find that the essence isn't tied to brain activity at all. Brain activity can be virtually flat, and you can be conscious—off somewhere in another realm. You just can't communicate with people in consensus reality.

OMNI: In your experience, does the brain possess "trapdoors" into the domain of the soul? For example, neuroscientist Arnold Mandell, of the University of California at San Diego, has said that chemicals such as LSD can be "pharmacologic bridges" to transcendence.

Lilly: I agree with Mandell. Acid—and, better, vitamin K—set up the chemical configuration of your brain so as to loosen the connection between the brain/body and the soul essence. Then the essence can move into alternate realities. I call this phenomenon the "leaky-mind hypothesis," or the "escaping-self hypothesis." There are a lot of ideas about the soul's location in the body, of course. In Spanish, when you're scared out of your wits, you say your soul is in your mouth—you have *el alma en la boca*. But the junction between the biocomputer and the essence is not localized in the brain; it's throughout the body. If you get out of your body, you can assume a fake body, an astral body, which can walk through walls. Your essence is represented in every cell in your body.

OMNI: Orthodox scientists accuse you of unscientific practices, and some even suggest that your consciousness-altering experiments and near-death accidents have impaired your judgment. How would you reply to them?

Lilly: Well, I'd just throw my credentials at them, and I'd ask them to sit down and read my papers. Only narrow-minded people criticize me, anyway; the broadband people, who can move easily across boundaries and disciplines, love my work. Down in Mexico, for instance, people have been educated to respect the superscience of the next century that their brujos and curanderos [sorcerers or witches and healers] are capable of calling up. My son John Lilly, Jr., who has lived for sixteen years among the Huichol Indians, has a wonderful movie about these matters. Our orthodoxy, on the other hand, is very Germanic, very European: If you can't see it touch it, or taste it, it doesn't exist.

I was brought up to divide science into theory and experiment, each guiding the other. The pure experimentalists who attack me lack good theory, but the theorists haven't

done the experiments. There are really three departments to science: experiment, theory, and experience. Experience is the part that doesn't get into the scientific journals.

OMNI: How would you answer the charge that your self-experimentation is subjective and, therefore, unverifiable?

Lilly: Subjectivity is nonsense. Neither subjectivity nor objectivity exists in nature. That's the mind-contained-in-the-brain belief of some psychiatrists and other scientists. The subject is an object is a subject. In a cybernetic system, you go around in a circle, and subject and object have no reality. The only way to isolate subject and object is to cut off the feedback and destroy the system. It's a false dichotomy.

OMNI: Do you believe that neuroscientists are on the verge of explaining the mind by mapping brain chemicals and so forth?

Lilly: I haven't yet seen any breakthroughs that are worth talking about. Neurochemistry is interesting but not specific enough yet. I suspect we'll find there are a million different compounds operating in the nervous system—specific compounds for specific regions and specific neurons. CalTech neuroscientist and Nobel laureate Roger Sperry's regeneration experiments [in which he rotated a salamander's eye and the severed nerve fibers somehow reconstructed their original connections to the optic tectum in the brain, as if they "knew" where to go] show that there are chemotropic substances that are specific to each fiber. I don't read neuroscience journals anymore; I depend on my friends to tell me what's going on.

You know, [Kurt] Godel's theory, translated, says that a computer of a given size can model only a smaller computer; it cannot model itself. If it modeled a computer of its own size and complexity, the model would fill it entirely and it couldn't do anything. So I don't think we can understand our own brains fully.

OMNI: Is it an extension of Godel's theorem, which states that some propositions can be neither proved nor disproved within a logical system?

Lilly: It's the same thing. If you have a closed system, the closed system can't account for itself. A set of sets that contains itself is a set that cannot possibly replicate itself. We are biological computers, and what Godel said is that you cannot conceive in full a computer the size of your own, for it would take up all the space you live in.

A sperm whale, with a brain six times the size of ours, could model a human and do a pretty good job of it. Since the model would take up only one sixth of his software brain, he could use the remaining five sixths to manipulate the model, predict its actions, and so on. The trouble is that this big computer is caught in a body that humans can kill.

OMNI: Could you elaborate on your concept of programming and "metaprogramming" the biocomputer?

Lilly: Have you seen the movie *Tron*? You must, because *Tron* is us. In it, the computer grabs the character played by Jeff Bridges and takes him inside, making him a program in the computer. The Master Control Program revolts, takes over the computer, and defies the users. So the users send in *Tron*, which is a program to destroy the Master Control Program that is preaching disbelief in the users.

Tron shows you things that are very, very spiritual. You can think of yourself as a biocomputer or an intelligent terminal, run by a cosmic computer in the Earth Coincidence Control Office. The biocomputer contains certain wired-in survival programs dealing with eating, reproduction, and so on, which lower animals also possess. But when the biocomputer reaches a certain threshold of complexity, there are higher-level programs in the association cortex that permit such things as making models, learning to learn, choice, and so forth. We have short-term choices, but God help you if you go against the Master

Control Program. A terminal cannot understand itself, because it lacks sufficient space, but a replica of itself is in the cosmic computer, which can understand it. At the highest level, your true self (the “user” in *Tron*) is a cosmic game player, with access to an infinite computer—the ECCO computer. That is metaprogramming, self-metaprogramming.

OMNI: How does one contact God?

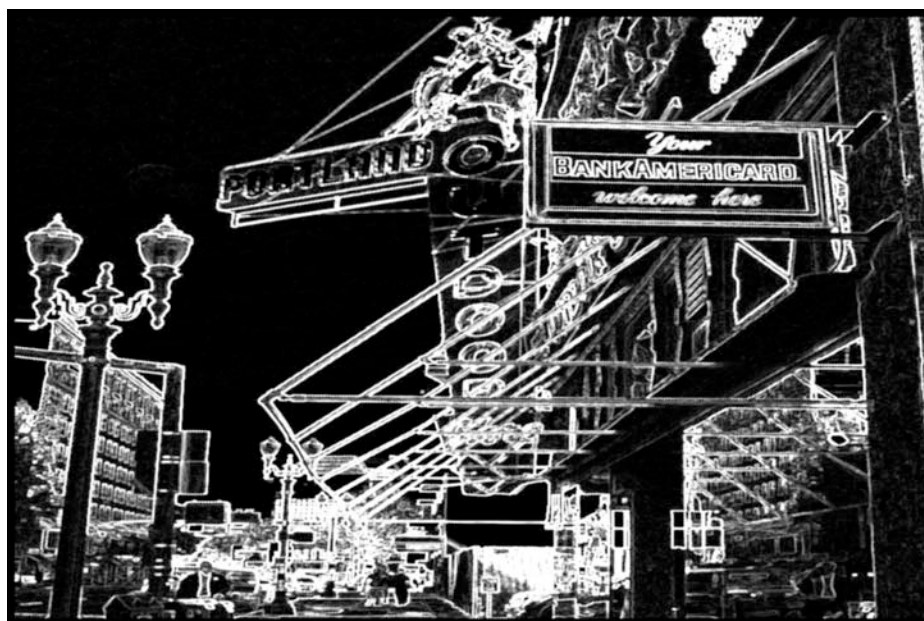
Lilly: In many cases, I didn’t know whether I was taken on a trip by God or by one of His business officers in the outer galaxy. Guides at each level above ours pretend to be God as long as you believe them. When you finally get to know the guide, he says, “Well, God is really the next level up.” God keeps retreating into infinity. I’ve thought that I was in the mind of God—seeing rotating universes, yin and yang, male and female—but perhaps God himself is beyond that. Have I told you about the “Dust-bowl God”?

OMNI: No. What is the “Dust-bowl God”?

Lilly: In my new book I have a theory called the Dust-bowl God. God got bored with this universe and the distribution of intelligence in it. So He made a dust bowl out beyond the galaxies. In this dust cloud, every particle is intelligent; on the atomic level, each particle is as intelligent as a human being. The dust particles made themselves into stars and planets and animals and humans and everybody knew everybody; everything was totally aware of everything around It. Now the problem is, if every particle is equally intelligent and greater assemblages are even more intelligent, what are the traffic rules for relations between, say, humans and elephants? It would be nice to see such a universe, wouldn’t it—the Dust-bowl Universe?

OMNI: How would it differ from ours?

Lilly: Right. How would it?



Arriving Portland series

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Previous parts of his serial fiction “Ecuador Hotel” appeared in *Cenacle* | 61 | April 2007 and *Cenacle* | 62 | June 2007. A tentative plan exists right now for Scriptor Press to publish another volume of his poetry soon.

G.C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His fiction most recently appeared in *Cenacle* | 61 | April 2007. It appears often online these days, especially at *Aphelion: The Webzine of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (<http://www.aphelion-webzine.com>) where he won the November 2007 Flash Fiction Challenge.

Michael Green contributed art to the *Psychedelic Review* back in the 1960s and also to Dr. Timothy Leary’s 1968 psychedelic memoir, *High Priest*.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*’s pages. Recently she told me she wanted to meet Diane Di Prima: “She’s a true beat, full glorious poet and I just read her *Recollections of My Life as a Woman*, which is amazing.” I think the two of them just might connect sometime . . .

Judith Hooper is a former newspaper reporter and magazine editor, and the author of *The 3-Pound Universe* (1986), *Would the Buddha Wear a Walkman?* (1989), and *Of Moths and Men* (2002). Her interview with John Lilly is also reprinted in Scriptor Press’s Burning Books 2007 title, *Infinite Coincidence: A Ninth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*.

Dale Pendell is the author of the *Phamako* trilogy and *Inspired Madness: The Gifts of Burning Man*. We met at Burning Man 2007 and later I was lucky enough to see the “Green Flames” essay, published in this issue. We spent too little time together, and I am hoping we reunite at Burning Man 2008.

Plato was born in Athens or Aegina between 424 and 423 BC. He was a mathematician, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. He was put on trial and subsequently executed between 348 and 347 BC. “The Myth of the Cave” is excerpted from Plato’s *Republic*, which was also reprinted in Scriptor Press’s Burning Books 2007 series.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Portland, Oregon, as of late September 2007, a move she long waited to accomplish, and is happy to have done so. Now a home with a dishwasher, a separate bedroom, trees outside the windows. A long way from the high plains of Colorado where she began, yet the same smart, funny, beautiful soul as back there, back then.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Portland, Oregon. Yes, Portland again, returned here after living away since 2003. One arrives home in various ways over the years, calls various places, people, ideas home. Strange to have still called this city home during those intervening years. Why is Portland home? Just a feeling. One felt for Hartford years ago, Boston too. Truth without discernable reason in it, yet no less for that.



Leaving Seattle series



Leaving Seattle series